DEVELOPING INCLUSION IN ENGLAND FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS:

IDENTIFYING AND EXPLORING THE LOCAL AUTHORITY CONTRIBUTION

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signed:

ABSTRACT:

This thesis examines the contribution of local authorities in England to the development of educational inclusion for children with special educational needs (SEN). The literature review traces the development of the concept of inclusion over the last three decades and assesses the status of national government policy. It examines the assertion that progress toward greater inclusion must typically be 'school-led', through an analysis of the literature on school effectiveness and improvement and the suggested linkages with the development of inclusive practice. It then considers the evidence of local authority influence.

Following an overview of methodological issues, it describes a multi-method research study, comprising three elements. The first two involved a formal re-analysis of data obtained by the author as part of a national survey of SEN support services in English LEAs commissioned by the DfEE and NASEN (Gray 2001). Quantitative data from the national questionnaire were used as an indicator of the priority given by a range of stakeholders (officers, support services, parent and schools) to the role of support services in promoting greater inclusion. Ratings given by each Authority were compared to national statistics on the percentage of pupils in special schools for a similar period (1997-2001). This comparison was supplemented by a qualitative analysis of field notes taken during visits to three local authorities, as part of the earlier survey.

The analysis of this secondary data was supplemented by an in-depth single case-study of an urban Authority where there had been a significant decrease in the percentage of pupils educated in special schools, which had been sustained over time.

The findings from the different elements are used to help understand the degree and nature of local authority influence and a conceptual model is proposed, building on earlier work by Ainscow et al (2003) and Croll & Moses (2000). Broader policy factors are proposed, which are consistent with the model but which may limit the direct application of the case-study findings to other local authorities in the current and future context.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Doing a part-time PhD is hard. During the 8 years of this thesis' gestation, I have seen my children grow from toddlers to teenage, and my parents move to a greater level of dependency. And my busy life as a strategic consultant to local authorities and national government has meant that it has been a major challenge to ensure that my academic study has got the attention it deserves.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Brahm Norwich, who has continued to believe that I would eventually 'get it done'. In addition to his ongoing support and encouragement, I have benefited from the intellectual challenge he has provided, which has always acted as a stimulus to further activity. I would also like to thank the University of Exeter for providing me financial support: this has been particularly helpful at those times when academic diligence was in danger of being off-set by loss of income.

I am also grateful to all my professional colleagues and friends, and in particular, Jackie Dearden and Gerv and Sue Leyden, who have supported me throughout this period, both practically, through commenting on various drafts, and by giving me time and space to rehearse my emerging ideas.

Finally, I owe much to my family: my father, who taught me to write, and to whose memory this thesis is dedicated; my mother, who taught me to 'sense' and 'feel', before this became a subject on the nationally-prescribed curriculum; and to my wife, Rachel, and my children, Jenny, Simon and James, who have endured weeks, months and years of my self-imposed 'purdah', and who are now owed an unimaginably large number of favours in return.

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ABBREVIATIONS:

AD:	Assistant Director
AEN:	Additional Educational Needs
ASD:	Autistic Spectrum Disorders
BESD:	Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
BSS:	Behaviour Support Service
CEO:	Chief Education Officer
CPA:	Comprehensive Performance Assessment
CPD:	Continuing professional development
DCSF:	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfEE:	Department for Education and Employment
DfES:	Department for Education and Skills
EBD:	Emotional and behavioural difficulties
ECM:	Every Child Matters
EP:	Educational psychologist
ESN(M):	Educationally subnormal (moderate)
GM:	Grant-maintained (status)
HI:	Hearing impairment
HMI:	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
IDP:	Inclusion Development Programme
IEP:	Individual education plan
IQM:	Inclusion quality mark
LA:	Local Authority
LEA:	Local Education Authority
LSA:	Learning support assistant
LST:	Learning Support Team
NC:	National Curriculum
OfSTED:	Office for Standards in Education
PD:	Physical disabilities
PEP:	Principal Educational Psychologist
PRU:	Pupil referral unit
SEN:	Special educational needs
SENCo:	Special educational needs coordinator
SENSS:	Special educational needs support service

SEO: Senior education officer

SER: School effectiveness research

SES: Socio-economic status

SLD: Severe learning difficulties

VI: Visual impairment

CHAPTER 1:   INTRODUCTION:

This research explores the contribution made by Local Authorities to the development of inclusion in education in England. It focuses particularly on the period leading up to 2001, when the research was initiated. However, it also seeks to identify patterns of influence that are more predictive, which could be generalised across settings and time.

The concept of inclusion has developed considerably over the last 20 years (and during the course of this research endeavour) to a point where some would argue that its meaning has become so diffuse that it may no longer be useful (eg Norwich and Gray 2007). The use of the term in this thesis relates particularly to children's 'presence' and 'participation' in mainstream schools (Ainscow et al 2000), as this was the typical usage at the time of research design and data collection. Some of the broader aspects of the concept are considered within the literature review and discussion sections.

A key 'defining characteristic' of inclusion has been the shift from children having to adapt to the existing 'fixtures' in mainstream schools (curriculum delivery, ethos, organisation, attitudes) to schools themselves taking active steps to 'remove barriers' and meet a range of individual needs. Inclusion is contrasted with 'integration', the term used in the early days of mainstreaming in England, which has come to be defined in narrower locational terms.

One of the consequences of this shift has been an increasing focus within the academic literature on the contribution of *schools* in promoting inclusion. Attempts have been made to describe the features of inclusive schools (eg Booth et al 2000), the characteristics of inclusive practice, and the ways in which this develops over time. Parallels are drawn with the broader school effectiveness and improvement agenda.

This has tended to downplay the effects of external influences, such as the contribution of Local Authorities. Where their role has been acknowledged, it has tended to be associated with criticisms of the more traditional 'integration' discourse: placing children in mainstream settings with insufficient consideration given to the adaptations needed for 'meaningful inclusion', or creating barriers for parents wishing to access more specialist provision, for ideological or financial reasons. The latter stereotype has

been picked up most strongly in recent national policy debates, which have begun to have a party political flavour (Warnock 2005; Cameron 2005).

The rationale for this thesis is the need to 're-balance' some of this research emphasis, to examine in more detail the role and contribution of Local Authorities to promoting inclusion in education, and to see what evidence there is of effects at this level. The focus is not simply on the ways in which Local Authorities might frame their expectations about inclusion (for example, through policies, guidance and broader communication) but also on the processes by which policy is turned into practice. A particular area of interest here is the role played by Local Authority support services for special educational needs (SEN). This links partly to my own personal experience as a Local Authority support service manager (Principal Educational Psychologist) and partly to research I carried out for the Department for Education and Employment and NASEN immediately prior to registering for my PhD degree (Gray 2001).

The DfEE/NASEN research looked at how support services were contributing to the implementation of the national inclusion agenda, and how this was being managed in a context where Local Authorities were under increasing pressure to delegate support service funding to schools. It raised a number of issues around the need for Local Authorities to have some central capacity for supporting the management of change, and the degree to which the presence of external support promoted mainstream ownership or dependency. The research highlighted the need for a broader look at the nature of Local Authority influence and the ways in which 'inclusive cultures' developed in particular localities. The current thesis supplements and builds on those findings, using formal re-analysis of some existing material, an examination of relationships between elements of the quantitative data and other statistical information, and an additional 'in-depth' case study, which included a broader range of perspectives on change.

My interest in this area derives from my background as a Local Authority practitioner, support service manager and senior officer with strategic responsibility for SEN and inclusion. Since leaving Local Authority employment in 1997, I have worked as a freelance consultant, supporting both local and national government in the development of policy and strategy in relation to services and provision for 'vulnerable children'. I am therefore particularly motivated to try and understand how change might best be

achieved across a diverse range of Local Authority (and school) contexts. My work inevitably involves a considerable amount of reflection and learning from professional experience. However, undertaking more formal and systematic academic research in this area has provided me with the opportunity to develop a clearer conceptualisation and stronger evidence base for the Local Authority role and to challenge some of my existing biases. It has also enabled me to 'connect' with a broader range of theoretical resources, through studying a range of relevant literature and related research. Hopefully, it will also be a useful addition to the body of 'research capital' that is available for others to learn from.

Perhaps inevitably, my background has an effect on my research orientation. This can be exemplified in a number of ways. Firstly, I have a strong commitment to achieving 'inter-connectedness' between theory and practice. In my view, theory development in applied social science areas needs to be linked to a good understanding of practical issues. Similarly, practice development needs to be informed (and enriched) by theory and conceptualisation. As Lewin (1951) famously argued, 'there's nothing so practical as a good theory'. In this context, I am attracted to the Aristotelian notion of 'practical wisdom' (*phronesis*) and its applications to the areas of social science and education (see Flyvbjerg (2001); Rayner (2007)).

Secondly, my view of the relationship between theory and practice means that I am not content with critiquing social policy or identifying 'policy tensions' at a purely theoretical level. In this respect, I am interested not just in the analysis of 'policy dilemmas' in relation to inclusion (as recently outlined by Norwich 2008) but also in the way that these are addressed and resolved in practice (at school and Local Authority level). Here, the notions of 'principled pragmatism' and 'strategic choice' have a particular value (Friend & Hickling 1997).

Thirdly, I have a strong interest in the application (and applicability) of research findings. In this respect, I would align myself with those (eg Griffiths 1998) who argue that a key motivation of educational (and social) research should be to promote social justice. In addition, I would concur with the view of Pollard (2005 cit Hodgson & Spours 2006) that policy analysis should move beyond analysis *of* policy to include analysis *for* policy (and understanding how to maximise research utilisation at policy and practice level).

Finally, as a policy/strategy consultant undertaking a formal piece of academic research as part of a higher degree, I need to recognise and be aware of the differences between 'academic research' and 'consultancy' discourses. However, I am also interested in exploring the relationships between them. For example, my consultancy activity typically involves some analysis of policy context and practice issues in individual Local Authorities. It seeks to achieve understandings of 'reality' at the macro, meso and micro levels (Guralnick 1982), through interviews and a study of sample cases. It is usually a paid activity, with a 'commissioner' who may have particular beliefs and expectations. Finance and 'commissioner control' may limit the scope of investigation and levels of access to the range of possible sources. What difference in practice is there between this process and the involvement of academic researchers in 'field-based' research, particularly if this is commissioned by local or national government/other organisations on a funded basis ? And what are the advantages and disadvantages, in terms of process and outcomes, of formal research being undertaken by someone who has already established a consultant identity or a consultancy relationship with the organisations s/he is studying ?

In undertaking research in an area where I have a professional and personal interest, it is important to be clear about potential bias. Strategies for addressing this issue are outlined in more detail in the Methodology and Discussion sections of this thesis. At this point, I am limiting myself to a summary of my 'points of connection' to the research topic, the potential benefits of prior perspectives and experience in this field, and the main areas of possible bias. These are summarised in Table 1 (below).

As a senior officer in Nottinghamshire, with strong beliefs on the links between inclusion and social justice, I was significantly involved in the formation and implementation of the Authority's 'Children First' initiative, which saw a significant reduction in the percentage of children attending specialist provision, both within and out of county, and a substantial fall in the percentage with statements of need. I have my own views about the nature of this change and how it was achieved. In looking more broadly at Local Authority effects and influences, the main areas of potential bias are likely to be:

    (a) an over-estimation of Local Authority influence

(b) an under-estimation of practical issues at individual school/pupil level and the importance of school ethos/leadership

(c) over-generalisation of the processes of change to other Authorities, which may have taken a different (and equally valid) route to achieving similar outcomes

(d) under-estimation of contextual differences

Table 1:   **Identifying potential bias arising from 'points of connection' with the research area:**

Point of connection	Potential benefits	Potential bias
Senior LA officer	Detailed experience of substantial change in one Authority	Over-estimation of LA role Over-generalisation of change processes
Support service manager	More detailed perspective on 'policy to practice' issues	Over-estimation of support service role ('assumed usefulness')
Consultant	Broader perspectives on contextual differences and possible 'universals'	Invalid attribution of conclusions to research (vs experience)
Researcher	Theory/practice orientation	Relevant conceptual resources overlooked; insufficient theoretical elaboration
Parent	Personal experience of disability and 'inclusion in practice'	Over-generalisation of the 'parental perspective'

As a support service manager during this period, I might have a clearer picture on 'policy to practice' issues. However, I might be inclined to over-estimate the contribution of support services (psychologists) to achieving successful mainstream inclusion, a tendency that Lindsay & Thompson (1997) and others have described more broadly as 'assumed usefulness'.

As a consultant, I have developed broader perspectives on contextual differences and 'universals'. It has been important to be able to delineate between 'views from experience' and the evidence available from the findings of this particular piece of research.

As a 'pragmatically-oriented' researcher, I am inevitably concerned with issues of validity, reliability and generalisability, which is helpful in overcoming some of the limitations of single case study research. However, in order to develop broader

conceptualisations that could inform practical understandings, it has been important for me to remain open to the value of a broader set of theoretical resources, from across a range of academic 'domains'.

Finally, I am a parent of a child with learning disabilities (Down's syndrome). There are advantages here in having some experience of the 'parental perspective' and the 'system in practice'. Moreover, in my interviews with parents during the in-depth Local Authority case study, this background appeared to add some personal 'legitimacy', producing richer and more detailed narratives. However, it has been important to avoid generalisation based on personal experience and limited samples, as 'parents' are a very diverse group and there may be significant differences in 'inclusion issues' for individual children and different types of need.

The thesis is presented in relatively conventional terms. Chapter 2 provides a broad overview of understandings and debates around the concept of 'inclusion' and looks at the evidence for school and Local Authority influence. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and approach and highlights a range of issues in design and interpretation. Chapters 4-6 report on the findings of the three elements of the research design, with an overview at the end of each chapter. Chapter 7 draws together the evidence from all the data sources and presents a conceptual model for understanding Local Authority influence, along with a discussion of the broader policy context.

CHAPTER 2:   LITERATURE REVIEW:

This review is organised into two broad sections. The first (2.1) focuses on the notion of 'inclusion' and tracks the way that this concept has evolved in relation to education and schools. Some of the main debates about inclusion are then briefly summarised. The development of the Government's position on inclusion in England is outlined, with reference to key legislation and guidance, and the section ends with some perspectives on progress at national and international level.

The second section looks at some of the evidence on school and local authority level effects on the development of inclusion. The first part (2.2) examines the assertion that inclusion is, and needs to be, led predominantly by schools/educational establishments themselves. Links are made to the broader literature on school effectiveness and improvement, and the nature of the relationship between 'school quality' and inclusion. The second part (2.3) transfers this analysis to the *local authority* level, in terms of evidence for broader local authority effects on school improvement and, more specifically, their contribution to the development of inclusion. The final part of this section focuses in on the role of local authority support services for SEN and examines the available literature on their role and impact.

2.1:   Understanding inclusion

2.1.1   Evolution of the concept: the early days:

The origins of the drive towards inclusion have been traced back by some (eg Biklen 1985, Thomas and Vaughan 2004) to the 1960s. A number of key influences tend to be cited. The first of these was the 'normalisation' movement in the United States. One of its major proponents was Wolfensberger (1968) who argued that people with disabilities, including those with significant learning difficulties, made better progress when expected to participate in normal social activity (rather than being subjected to a specialist environment with untypical norms). Another key influence was the growing distrust of separate establishments for people with disabilities or mental illnesses, exemplified by Goffman (1961) and others. A range of evidence suggested that people placed in such establishments (or 'institutions') could remain 'out of sight and out of mind' and in danger of being subjected to a range of abuse.

More recently, some commentators have pointed to the effects of the growing voice of disabled people themselves in the post-war period, linked to the wider experience of physical disability (resulting from wartime injury) and the economic value of disabled workers during a time of employee shortage (Humphries & Gordon 1992).

These trends contributed to a number of changes in social policy in the UK. At the broadest level, there was an emphasis on more community-based provision and care for vulnerable people and greater safeguards to protect their rights as citizens. More specifically, within the field of education, this period heralded the assertion that all children were educable (and should therefore attend schools) rather than be regarded as within the separate jurisdiction of Health Departments.

Somewhat paradoxically, the 1970s saw a significant rise in the number of pupils educated in special schools in the UK, particularly for those catering for ESN(M)[1] and 'maladjusted' children. Commentators such as Tomlinson (1981), researching this period, found that the shift from medical to 'educational/functional' criteria for decision-making did little in itself to reduce the expectation of specialist or separate school provision.

Concern about the use of this kind of provision was fuelled by evidence of over-representation of black pupils (particularly boys) in both the ESN(M) and maladjusted school sectors (eg Coard 1971). This raised similar issues as to whether segregation of children from the ordinary school setting involved some infringement of their rights.

The end of the 1970s saw the publication of the Warnock Report (1978), which picked up a number of relevant policy and professional themes. Criticised by some for its ambivalent position on mainstream integration, the Report set out to try and remove some of the arbitrary barriers between 'special' and 'ordinary' children, through its concept of a 'continuum'. It also picked up the themes of rights and 'protection' through its recommendation that the more vulnerable children should have their needs documented in a formal/statutory 'record'. This was seen as protecting the entitlements of such pupils, whether placed in separate school settings or, as might increasingly happen, within ordinary mainstream schools.

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[1] 'educationally subnormal (moderate)'

The Warnock Report formally introduced a range of new terminology. Children with disabilities or learning difficulties were seen to have 'special educational needs'. It was expected that most would be 'integrated' into a mainstream school, although separate, more specialist, provision might still be needed for those with more complex difficulties. The authors of the Report were aware that placing vulnerable pupils in mainstream settings did not necessarily mean that their needs were adequately met. They therefore made a helpful distinction between 3 types of integration: <u>locational</u> (which simply described the child's presence in an ordinary school setting); <u>social</u> (involving positive social benefits to a child from mixing with his/her mainstream peers); and <u>functional</u> (describing a more active educational engagement between the pupil and his/her school).

The post-Warnock period is marked by increasing evidence in the literature of mainstream integration initiatives (eg Hegarty et al 1981, Booth & Statham 1982). A number of these involved setting up mainstream 'unit' provision for pupils with special educational needs, as an alternative to special school, and focused particularly on those with physical or sensory difficulties (Hegarty et al 1982). Such initiatives recognised the limitations of locational integration. However, a number of authors (eg Gray & Selfe 1983) argued that the mainstream unit approach could act as a step towards more active consideration of social and functional integration opportunities.

Considerable energy was also put into developing schools' capacity to provide more effectively for the broader range of children with special educational needs (Warnock's '18%'). Many LEAs during this period built up significant SEN support services to help achieve this aim. The success of this approach was reviewed by Gipps et al (1987) and later on in this review.

Progress towards a reduction in use of special schools during the 1980s was relatively modest, with considerable variation across the country. By the middle of the decade, this led to a call by some (eg CSIE 1985) for more active attempts by LEAs to bring about change. The first set of national statistics were published in 1985 (Swann 1985), allowing comparison between LEAs in England and Wales regarding their use of special schools, both within area and out of authority (in the independent/non-maintained special school sector).

At the same time, more fundamental questions were being asked both about the concept of integration and the methods being used to promote it (eg Swann 1982; Open University E241). At a philosophical level, 'integration' began to be criticised for its attempt to 'fit' children with special educational needs into environments that did not change. Problems in achieving integration were then seen as an inability of the child to cope, rather than a failure of the system to adapt. At a methodological level, the favoured intervention approaches (based on behavioural technologies) were seen as embodying this philosophy and confirming a 'deficit model'. Experience following the 1981 Education Act in England also raised questions about the degree to which integration was only being achieved on a 'conditional' basis (ie through promises of significant amounts of additional resource). While additional help in the classroom proved to be popular, some authors (eg Biklen et al.1989) pointed out that this could interfere with the degree to which children were 'included' in normal classroom social and educational activity.

2.1.2   Evolution of the concept: the 1990s and beyond:

During the late 1980s, there was a progressive shift to the need for change at *school* rather than individual pupil level. This coincided with the growing emphasis among special needs professionals in England on the importance of a 'whole school approach' (eg Thomas and Feiler 1988). In his review of the literature on integration in the early 1990s, Hegarty (1993) concluded:

> *'Integration is in the end a matter of school reform. It entails creating schools that respond to students' individual differences within a common framework. The areas of action are the same as for any other reform of schooling: curriculum, academic organisation, pedagogy, staffing levels and deployment, resourcing, parental involvement and professional development.'*

Vislie (2003) has associated this shift with the move away from the discourse of 'integration' towards the discourse of 'inclusion'. While a number of authors (eg Pijl et al 1997, Booth 2000, Norwich 2008) have argued that there is greater overlap and continuity between the two discourses, Vislie and others (eg Sebba and Ainscow 1996) consider that the conceptual shift has been more significant.

For them, the term 'inclusion' brought together a number of different strands, which also took on board international moves towards a stronger 'disability rights' approach. These strands can be summarised as follows:

(i) A conscious recognition that mainstream environments need to change, adapt and 'reconstruct' themselves in order to accommodate a greater diversity of pupils

(ii) A shift from a 'medical model' of disability and special educational needs, and away from 'deficits' towards a broader notion of 'diversity'

(iii) A view of inclusive schools and systems as needing to embody these values, seeing pupils with disabilities/special educational needs as part of a broader diverse population which they have a responsibility to educate.

At this stage, parallels started to be made with the 'inclusion' of other groups (eg children from ethnic minorities, for whom 'rights and entitlements' and the responsibilities of mainstream schools appeared to be more securely established).

Vislie (2003) highlights the importance of the UNESCO Salamanca statement (1994), through which inclusion obtained status as a 'global descriptor'. For developing countries, there was a need for a broader term that did not presuppose the existence of special school provision and which promoted access and participation for children who may not have received any formal education at all.

In England, the advent of 'inclusion' as an establishment term coincided with the election of a new Government in 1997. An early focus was on combating 'social exclusion', with schools and education seen as significant contributors to achieving a more inclusive society. A more detailed commentary on the development of the Government's position on inclusion is provided in a subsequent section of this review. However, at this stage, it is important to note that New Labour's emphasis on promoting educational attainment and engagement as the key strategy for combating disaffection and building 'economic capital' had a significant effect on their priorities within the SEN/disability inclusion agenda. Definitions started to go beyond processes such as 'access' and 'participation' and include outcomes such as 'pupil achievement' (eg Ainscow 1999).

By the late 1990s, it is possible to detect two emerging trends within the inclusion discourse. Firstly, with no clear evidence from national government or on the ground of

a wholesale 'reconstruction' of education and schooling, the unitary nature of the concept of inclusion started to be questioned (Dyson 2000). Secondly, as 'inclusion' became more of an establishment term, definitions started to shift to accord with differing values positions and priorities (Clough 2000; Nind 2005), as an example of 'contested territory'.

The new millennium has seen an expansion in the way that the term 'inclusion' is used and, as a concept, it has lost some of its clarity. Reference is made, for example, to 'inclusive systems' of schooling that encompass both mainstream and special school sectors, as different types of school that have equal value (eg Rayner 2007). A more specific use of the term 'social inclusion' has been introduced, which describes pupils as 'included' or 'reintegrated' if they are receiving formal education following permanent exclusion, whether this is in a mainstream school, pupil referral unit or special school (DfES 1999). The OfSTED framework for evaluating inclusion in mainstream schools has tended to focus mainly on pupil participation/engagement in lessons, without any expectations on the degree of reliance on special school/off-site options (OfSTED 2000; 2009). For some, the emphasis on participation and 'belonging' means that pupils in special schools can be more 'included' than in the mainstream sector, if better account is taken of their learning needs (Tutt 2007, Warnock 2005).

At the broadest level, it could be argued, the term 'inclusion' has, for many people, come to describe the way in which they would like society (and schooling) to be. It is an idealised view, with definitions of the term differing, dependent on the particular emphasis of the user. Consensus about the value of inclusion has been achieved at the expense of the clarity of its meaning. In this respect, perhaps, the concept has become less useful over time, and it may be more helpful to articulate a number of different dimensions for change (eg Norwich and Gray 2007). Some of these are identified in Ainscow's definition (in particular, 'presence' and 'participation'). However, the character of inclusion also suggests other aspects more linked to adult activity and attitudes, such as 'mainstream ownership' (Dessent 1987) and the process of 'removing barriers' (Booth 2000).

2.1.3   Inclusion: some of the key debates:

Recent shifts in the meaning of inclusion have tended to obscure some of the debates and issues that affect policy and practice on the ground. These can be summarised under two broad headings: *value* and *practicality*[2].

Value:

Early debates in the US distinguished between 'radical integrationists' (eg Lipsky & Gartner 1996) who argued for wholesale desegregation and dismantling of the special school sector and advocates of the 'least restrictive environment' (eg Kaufman & Hallahan 1995), who accepted the benefits of promoting mainstream access, but questioned the value of 'mainstreaming for all'. In their view, for some individuals, in some contexts, separate education might be less 'restrictive' (in terms of the opportunities provided for learning and peer group relationships) than the expected mainstream option. At a more fundamental level, there were those who more fundamentally challenged the mainstreaming agenda, arguing that this was likely to have a negative impact on the children themselves, and on 'ordinary children' in mainstream classrooms whose education would be compromised.

In the literature, there was a call for more systematic evidence that integration was beneficial, with much of the debate focusing on anecdotal descriptions of successes and issues. As the 'disability rights' agenda developed, there was increasing acceptance, both in the literature and at the policy level, that the right of individual children and parents to access mainstream education should not be denied. However, it was still reasonable to question whether integration/inclusion had 'educational value'.

Lindsay (2007) is the latest in a line of academics who have examined the research evidence for the 'effectiveness' of inclusion/mainstreaming. Reviewing a number of studies published in key special needs journals during the period from 2001-2005, he concludes that they do not provide a clear endorsement for the positive effects of inclusion. In his view, the 'rights' agenda might lead some parents to choose the mainstream option, but the research indicates that children may not experience the expected benefits. For those parents who are more sceptical/less confident about the

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[2] These headings broadly correspond to the different types of 'inclusion discourse' identified by Dyson (2000), although he argues for differences across two dimensions, producing 4 inter-related discourses, as follows: (1) rationale for inclusion (rights and ethics); (2) rationale for inclusion (efficacy); (3) realisation of inclusive education (political); (4) realisation of inclusive education (pragmatic)

benefits of mainstream, the research might also support their 'right' to choose alternative/specialist provision if they consider that this would better meet their child's needs.

Lindsay's conclusions echo earlier arguments by Stobart (1986) that, in the absence of a clearer evidence base supporting positive outcomes from mainstreaming, integration was not '*psychologically defensible*'. Like these earlier authors, Lindsay's argument tends to be based on a requirement for 'integration/mainstreaming' to prove its worth. It is possible, on the basis of the outcomes of the research review, to argue an opposite position – that, in the absence of incontrovertible evidence of the benefits of special provision, it would be wrong to maintain it, unless there were other clear arguments for doing so (eg economic cost)[3]. As Booth (1983) pointed out, different conclusions are drawn, depending on individual values positions. One that is relatively neutral about location will argue (as Lindsay does) for the identification and extension of 'best/most effective practice' in whatever kind of setting this is found. One that places a higher value on the mainstreaming/rights agenda will focus effort on increasing effectiveness/ positive outcomes within that sector.

More specific debates have focused on the possibility that mainstreaming might have differential benefits for particular groups of children or levels of need and the degree to which mainstreaming has benefits or adverse consequences for 'other children' (see MacBeath et al 2006). The latter has particular importance from the point of view of mainstream teachers and politicians. Kalambouka et al (2005) undertook a systematic review of the literature on the impact of placing pupils with SEN in mainstream schools on the achievements of non-SEN children, as part of the UK EPPI (Evidence for Policy and Practice Initiative) programme. The findings indicated that, in general, there were no adverse effects, with 81% of findings reporting positive or neutral outcomes. Subsequent research commissioned by the Government found a small ('*but for practical purposes insubstantial*') negative correlation between mainstream school 'inclusivity' and attainment (Farrell et al 2007). This study is difficult to interpret due to (a) the limited measures used to assess school inclusivity (numbers of pupils with statements and on 'school action plus') and (b) the overlaps between inclusivity (as defined above)

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[3] Thomas & Loxley (2001) have criticised those who argue against 'ideologically informed' positions for tending to underestimate the influence of their own ideological values.

and other potential sources of variation in attainment levels not partialled out through the multi-level analysis.

A very different challenge to the value of mainstream inclusion has come from broader disability theorists in the UK such as Barton, Barnes and Armstrong. While at an early stage they were supportive of the right of disabled students to be educated alongside their mainstream peers, they have become increasingly sceptical of the value of mainstreaming if it is not accompanied by more wholesale social change. Armstrong (2005) for example, in his critique of New Labour policy on disability in education has argued that:

> *'A policy promoting inclusive education that remains constrained by the goal of assimilating those with impairments into mainstream schools without addressing the exclusionary character of a disabling society is doomed to reinforce the very exclusionary process that it seeks to overcome'*

For some disability theorists, it has become difficult to disentangle the liberating benefits of mainstream access from the threat of assimilation and coercion by a broader dominant non-disabled 'mainstream' culture (eg Corker 1998, Spandler 2007).

Practicality:

The typical response from schools to national and local proposals to promote inclusion has been an acceptance of the broad principles but scepticism about the practicalities and resourcing of the change (Housden 1992). Studies of the financial costs of implementing inclusion have come to different conclusions dependent on the methodology used. An early analysis by SCOPE and the National Union of Teachers (1992) found that inclusion required additional investment at the early stages but no cost differential once mainstream provision became established and embedded. A subsequent Scottish study (HMIe/Audit Scotland 2003) argued that higher costs were involved but these tended to be based on the assumption that similar patterns of specialist services and provision were required in the mainstream context as were currently provided in the special school/unit sector.

The focus on debates about the meaning and value of inclusion has tended to mean that there has been limited examination of how inclusion works in practice. A study by Dyson and Millward (2000) of 12 schools identified on the basis of their commitment to

inclusion that a number of compromises to the 'inclusion ideal' needed to be made to take account of practicalities and the macro- and micro-politics of school realities. Dyson (2001) drew on Norwich's earlier concept of 'dilemmas' (Norwich 1993) to argue that there are a number of tensions that affect the realisation of inclusive education at both the school and the broader political level. A key dilemma is the degree to which, in an inclusive society, all children should be treated the same, set against the need to recognise and respond to individual difference (which implies greater levels of diversity in provision and educational experiences).

Norwich (2008) has recently followed up his analysis by identifying a number of 'dilemmas of difference, inclusion and disability'. He summarises these as follows:

(1) The 'common curriculum' dilemma: whether children with disabilities and difficulties should have the same learning content as other children or some different content

(2) The 'identification' dilemma: whether and how to identify children as needing additional/special educational provision

(3) The 'parent-professional' dilemma: whether and how parents and professionals can share power relating to decisions about children with difficulties and disabilities

(4) The 'integration' dilemma: whether and to what extent children with disabilities and difficulties learn in regular classes (as opposed to needing some teaching in withdrawal/separate settings)

Norwich has framed these dilemmas operationally to allow discussion with a range of professionals and administrators in the UK, Netherlands and US, to assess how far they are recognised or denied, and resolved. In his view, people's responses to such ideological dilemmas are likely to have a significant impact on how they deal with the challenges of inclusive education at a practical level.

2.1.4   The Government's position on inclusion in England:

To some extent, dilemmas and policy tensions can also be applied to the development over time of the Government's stance on inclusion (cf Dyson 2001). However, the dilemmas tend to be broader and have a contextual and political overlay. A key tension, for example, has been the need to balance the drive to increase standards of attainment

(for the majority of pupils) against the promotion of greater access to mainstream education (for the few). This issue is considered in more detail later on in this review.

The Government's position on integration in education during the 1980s was broadly sympathetic to the creation of enhanced mainstream access and opportunities. However, it drew heavily on the concept of 'needs' outlined in the Warnock Report and there was an emphasis on ensuring appropriate safeguards. The 1981 Education Act (section 2(3)) set out a requirement that children with SEN should wherever possible be educated in mainstream schools provided three conditions were met. These were:

(i)   the placement had to be capable of meeting the child's needs
(ii)   there had to be no adverse effects on the education of other children
(iii)   the placement had to be consistent with the Authority's responsibility to make efficient use of resources

It was expected that numbers needing to be placed in special schools would reduce as new mainstream opportunities became available, but that there would be a continuing place for this kind of provision for those children with the most significant difficulties. The Government (and HMI) were keen that specialist skills and expertise should be retained, through the development of mainstream units where appropriate and the maintenance of support services, that were expected to play both an advisory and individual support function. The role of parents was acknowledged, but this tended to be limited to their involvement in formal assessment procedures (parental views) rather than playing a more significant role in decision-making.

While there was an expectation that special school numbers might reduce, the Government at that stage maintained a relatively 'liberal' position on this issue, with little pressure on those Authorities that continued to make high use of segregated provision. Moreover, there was no clear demand on mainstream schools to change their practices, despite the emphasis on training and support.

The early 1990s saw little change to this position. However, the advent of school self-management (1988 Education Act), together with increasing ambiguities about relative responsibilities for providing for children with special educational needs, led to the production of a new SEN 'Code of Practice' (1994). This set out in more detail the

processes that schools and local authorities were expected to follow. During this period, there was also a significant rise in permanent exclusions, attributed by some to a combination of curriculum restrictions and greater school autonomy, which led the Government to issue specific new Guidance in relation to support and provision for children with behaviour difficulties ('Pupils with problems': Circulars 8-13/94).

The Code strengthened the importance of the involvement of parents and enhanced their role in decision-making. The notion of 'parental preference' was subsequently included in the 1996 Education Act, with the expectation that parents should be given the necessary information to exercise 'choice' from a range of placement options, provided that these met their child's assessed needs. The introduction of Independent Appeals Tribunals gave parents greater powers to challenge local authority decisions.

The arrival of a new (Labour) Government in 1997, with a strong commitment to combat social exclusion, is seen by some as having strengthened the national inclusion imperative. However, while the Government's social inclusion agenda emphasised the importance of education, its main concern was with increasing academic engagement with a view to increased economic productivity (Ozga 1999). In this respect, the inclusion of children with special educational needs was, to some extent, an appendix to the main thrust of education reform. The Government's Green Paper 'Excellence for All Children' (1997) was a later adjunct to the Government's main policy 'Excellence in Schools': a reminder that children with SEN and disabilities should be 'included' in the broader enterprise[4]. In practice, despite the policy rhetoric at the time, there was little noticeable change in direction. As Armstrong (2005) points out, although the document adopted the 'language of inclusion', and declared a firm commitment to progress along this route[5], its focus was mainly on meeting individual pupils' needs and on '*improving the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of systems for managing these needs*[6]' (p138).

In adopting the term 'inclusion', the document added a further defining characteristic, that inclusion '*is a process, not a fixed state*'. This legitimated the need for a more gradual path towards inclusive schooling, which would depend on a number of changes occurring, in terms of skills, attitudes, confidence, resources, ethos and organisation.

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[4] As a 'bolt-on' to the broader educational reforms
[5] In line with the 1994 Salamanca agreement
[6] A revised Code of Practice issued in 2001 attempted to reduce the bureaucracy associated with the previous 'assessment stages', as well as further strengthening the role of parents

Although the Green Paper's broader policy direction was supportive of mainstream inclusion for children with SEN, there were no accompanying targets for reduction in special school numbers, at a time when national policy for schools and public services was becoming increasingly target-driven.

In both this document and the subsequent Programme of Action (1998), the Government indicated its continuing commitment to retaining some special school provision for those that needed it. This was confirmed in its subsequent guidance on 'Inclusive Schooling' (DfES 2001), which identified a number of principles that, in its view, encapsulated an 'inclusive education service'. These are quoted verbatim below:

- *Inclusion is a process by which schools, local education authorities and others develop their cultures, policies and practices to include pupils.*
- *With the right training, strategies and support, nearly all children with special educational needs can be successfully included in mainstream education.*
- *An inclusive education service offers excellence and choice and incorporates the views of parents and children.*
- *The interests of all pupils must be safeguarded.*
- *Schools, local education authorities and others should actively seek to remove barriers to learning and participation.*
- *All children should have access to an appropriate education that affords them the opportunity to achieve their personal potential.*
- *Mainstream education will not always be right for every child all of the time. Equally, just because mainstream education may not be right at a particular stage, it does not prevent the child from being included successfully at a later stage.*

It can be seen that these principles bring together a number of different elements from both 'new' and 'old' discourses, with an emphasis in some places on progressive mainstreaming and in others on ensuring appropriate provision for individual needs and parental choice.

Following the re-election of the Labour Government, there was a significant shift in legislation with the SEN and Disability Act (2001). This extended the requirements of Disability Discrimination legislation to schools. One consequence of these requirements was the shift in language from 'needs' to 'rights'. Two of the three conditions that restricted children's rights to a mainstream education were removed ('meeting the child's needs' and 'efficient use of resources'). With regard to 'effects on other pupils', increased demands were placed on schools and local authorities to demonstrate that they

had taken all reasonable steps to address this issue before concluding that a mainstream placement was not viable.

The removal of the 'three conditions' was welcomed by a number of disability organisations at the time (CSIE; Alliance for Inclusion). However, it was recognised that the 'right to mainstream' meant relatively little if the attitudes of mainstream staff, and the quality of the education on offer, were negative and unfavourable. The legislation required schools and local authorities to 'make reasonable adjustments' and treat disabled children 'no less favourably' than their mainstream peers. In addition, an anticipatory duty was placed on staff at both levels (through the development of access strategies and accessibility plans). In practice, these were slow to develop, and tended to focus on adaptations to the physical environment, as opposed to broader adaptations in curriculum delivery and ethos (as originally envisaged in the legislation) (OfSTED 2004). A literature review commissioned at the time by the Disability Rights Commission pointed out that the main types of discrimination experienced by disabled students in schools fell within some of these 'softer' areas (Gray 2003).

A process was developed to allow individual disabled young people and their parents to challenge instances of discrimination, through an expanded 'SEN & Disability Tribunals' process. However , it was decided that successful appeals would not lead to financial compensation, with school action limited to a formal apology/specific modifications to practice and an indication of how similar incidents of discrimination would be avoided in the future (with relatively limited requirement on Tribunals themselves to monitor broader outcomes). In practice, perhaps for this reason, there have been relatively low numbers of disability discrimination cases brought to the Tribunal since this option became available (Hughes 2008).

Anecdotally, it could therefore be argued that, while the removal of the 'three conditions' may have had *symbolic* importance, in recognising the 'rights' perspective, this has not been accompanied by a significant shift in thinking or practice at individual school or teacher level.

The SEN & Disability Act did however trigger a range of further activity at national level, including two reports by the Audit Commission (2002a; 2002b) and the setting up of a national working group (including the voluntary sector and other key stakeholders)

to help develop the next phase of the Government's strategy. This was issued with a title 'Removing barriers to achievement' (DfES 2004), which linked language from the 'rights agenda'/social model of disability ('removing barriers') to the Government's broader priorities (educational attainment). The document was accompanied by a longer-term (10 year) action plan, which some saw as evidence of a continuing Government commitment to progressing the inclusion agenda, and others, as a sign of SEN and inclusion slipping down the Government's priority list.

Lloyd (2008) argues that these documents reflect the increasing subsidiarity of mainstreaming within the Government's broader social inclusion agenda. She refers back to Dyson's earlier prediction that the increasing emphasis on narrower educational outcomes and on the engagement of marginalised groups in this agenda, would lead to less concern about 'whether or not that engagement takes place in the context of the 'common' classroom, school and curriculum' (Dyson 2001).

In the lead up to the Removing Barriers strategy, the Government had set up a specific working group to consider the future role of special schools (DfES 2003). This concluded that there was a continuing place for this kind of provision, but that they should be (a) part of an 'inclusive school system' (b) focused, in their direct provision, on those young people with the most complex and significant needs, and (c) actively involved in helping build mainstream school capacity, so that a broader range of needs could be met successfully within that environment. While this seemed to offer greater clarity about where special schools fitted within a strategy for inclusion, there remained considerable practical ambiguities. In their contribution to a recent SEN Policy Options seminar on the future of special schools, Norwich & Gray (2007) pointed out a number of 'unknowns': for example, the way in which 'complex needs' should be defined, and the type of 'mainstream support' that should be considered as acceptable. Moreover, they raised the issue of how far special schools could be seen as offering a 'service' within a broader policy environment that reinforced their autonomy as individual and separate institutions.

The Government's continuing ambivalence on the special school issue was highlighted subsequently by the House of Commons Select Committee (Education and Skills)'s SEN enquiry (2006), which called for greater clarity, at a time when there were party political allegations of major reductions in the levels of special school provision. At this

stage, the Minister responded that the Government would be '*content*' for the special school population to remain broadly constant (a national pattern that had been maintained fairly consistently during the period of the New Labour government, despite media/political allegations (and the range of Government policy initiatives and theoretical reconceptualisations described in this review): see OfSTED 2004; Rayner 2007).

The Government's more recent Every Child Matters agenda and its emphasis on 'personalised learning' have been seen by some (eg Cheminais 2006) as offering new opportunities for valuing and responding to individual diversity (with inclusion being seen in these very broad terms). Others would argue that the ECM agenda has merely served to strengthen the 'deficit' (within-child/family) model of SEN, with 'causes' for difficulties being located beyond the teacher/school's direct control. Moreover, while 'personalisation' may offer a broader range of curriculum pathways, it remains uncertain as to how far these will be equally valued or ensure access to children's educational (including both social and curricular) entitlements.

In summary, therefore, an overview of the Government's position on inclusion indicates variable commitment to the mainstreaming agenda, and a tendency to try and adapt the discourse of 'inclusion' to fit with some of its broader policy priorities. These priorities have tended to be defined in terms of narrower outcome measures (attainment levels and other public service targets) and influenced by short-term media/electoral pressures. As a result, there has been little evidence of the kinds of social and educational 'transformation' that many theorists would see as necessary to give inclusion a real meaning. In this context, the Government's position is probably best seen as characterised by its own policy dilemmas, with 'elements of 'inclusion' and 'special education' discourses bound together pragmatically to meet the mood of the time'.

2.1.5   Progress on inclusion:

Dianne Ferguson, in her recent overview of international trends in inclusive education (2008), highlights some of the positive progress that has been achieved. However, she expresses some disappointment at the degree of improvement over time:

> '*What remains troubling is that the rhetoric of inclusive education for students with disabilities is not matched by enough reality. After a decade or longer, the news is not good enough. Wide geographic differences in the US and Europe,*

differential schooling and outcomes for students who have some disabilities, or who are non-white and lower income continue…….While access and presence in 'mainstream' classrooms and schools is a necessary step forward toward inclusive education….it is clearly not enough. What happens in those classrooms is equally critical to achieving genuine inclusive education'. (p.113)

Even on the 'mainstream presence' dimension, progress in England has been relatively modest. Looking at official Government statistics and data presented by CSIE (2002; 2005), there appears to have been a small reduction in the percentage of the overall child population placed in special schools during the period from 1997-2001, followed by relative stability since then. However, as OfSTED (2004) pointed out, these figures do not include placements in off-site and alternative provision for children with behaviour difficulties, which have risen exponentially.

Vislie (2003) expresses similar disappointments about the level of progress, which she attributes to the continuing dominance of the 'integration' discourse. As evidence for this position, she points to the emphasis within mainstream schools on 'identification', 'diagnosis' and 'recording' of individual needs/deficits, and the reliance on 1:1 ancillary support. In her view, both of these practices have been 'imported' into mainstream from the 'special education' tradition and act as major barriers to the development of more inclusive thinking[7].

In his historical overview, Dyson (2001) distances himself from both *'optimistic'* and *'pessimistic'* views. The first of these points to progressive evolution and improvement, as a result of positive changes in knowledge, skills and societal attitudes; the second 'critical' tradition sees the inclusion agenda as constantly undermined and reconstituted by powerful conservative forces that sustain existing inequities. Dyson sees history as reflecting the 'interplay' of contradictions between different ethical and ideological imperatives (which professionals, academics and politicians all try to resolve in different ways through balance and compromise).

With an increasingly broad and diverse definition of inclusion, it could be argued that there is a need for a clearer set of dimensions and indicators against which progress can be judged. There have been some attempts to do this at school level, for example,

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[7] Similar issues with regard to the use of teaching/support assistants have been raised in England by Blatchford et al (2009), in the US by Suter & Giangreco (2009), and in Norway (Egilson & Traustadottir 2009); cf also Cook et al (2006)

through the Index for Inclusion and a variety of 'Inclusion Quality Marks' (eg Coles & Hancock 2002). However, these approaches do not provide a clear evidence base for assessing progress beyond the level of the individual institution, for the following reasons:

1) Schools' self-ratings on the Index are typically unmoderated and tend not to draw on external perspectives (eg from support services or parents). It is therefore difficult to aggregate and compare progress/levels across different establishments[8].

2) The emphasis on internal process characteristics may miss some of the more challenging aspects of inclusion (eg schools' response to individual pupils with significant needs/behaviour issues) and locational evidence (eg numbers of children with SEN/disabilities who do not attend their local mainstream school).

3) There also tends to be an assumption that schools and teachers will respond uniformly to all aspects of diversity (race, gender, disability), whereas there is anecdotal evidence that values and priorities can be more mixed

4) Embarking on the process of using the Index may have a value in itself, but cannot necessarily be interpreted as a sign of inclusive practice (though it may indicate an 'intent to improve').

5) 'Inclusion Quality Marks' do involve accreditation/moderation of evidence. However, they are voluntary, rather than embedded within the 'mainstream' processes for school self-evaluation. It is therefore difficult to generalise beyond the 'success' of individual institutions.

6) IQMs also imply an 'all or nothing' approach to inclusive schooling rather than a need to continuously improve, 'recharge' and reflect.

The absence of clear and agreed national definitions means that there are difficulties in achieving consistent formal judgements of school 'quality' in this area (for example, through the OfSTED school inspection framework), as well as methodological issues for researchers seeking to explore the nature of inclusive practices and the characteristics of inclusive schools (cf Nind et al 2004).

The situation is even more complex at national and local authority level. Although locational data ('segregation statistics') tend to be criticised as portraying a limited and misleading picture of inclusion, there are as yet no easily accessible alternatives by

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[8] Booth and Ainscow would probably argue that it was not designed for this purpose.

which 'progress' can be properly assessed. The Government has recently given responsibility for monitoring at local authority level to a private company (Capita), as part of the 'outsourcing' of its National Strategies activities. However, although they have a clear agenda for ensuring 'value for money' (use of the independent/non-maintained special school sector) and 'reducing bureaucracy' (numbers of statements), priorities are less clear with regard to the promotion and evaluation of educational inclusion[9]. This tends to be restricted to monitoring the implementation of predetermined national government initiatives (eg SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) and the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP), which has focused on effective provision for particular categories of special educational need (as opposed to more generic practice linked to individual difference and diversity).

In this context, it is interesting that the single indicator used formally by Government to evaluate local authority SEN performance remains an administrative one (the percentage of statutory assessments and statements completed within expected timescales).

2.2 Schools' contribution to pupil outcomes and inclusion

In their broader overview of the school effectiveness and improvement literature, Teddlie & Reynolds (2001) distinguished between 3 areas of interest. In their view, there are separate questions (and an associated need for research) about:

School effects:

Do schools make a difference to pupil outcomes? If so, how significant are their effects? How stable are they? Are they bigger/smaller in some contexts than others? Do schools have a more significant effect on some sorts of outcomes than others (eg academic vs personal/social)?

School effectiveness:

What characteristics are associated with more/less effective schools? What is the relative influence of management/leadership and teacher quality? What are the cultural correlates?

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[9] The focus is somewhat clearer in the area of Behaviour & Attendance, where the regional strategies advisers actively monitor exclusions and non-attendance data, as well as access to full-time education for pupils excluded from mainstream school.

School improvement:

What processes help schools to become more effective? What processes suit different situations (eg schools that are underachieving/ineffective; schools that are already relatively effective and are trying to improve further)?

These distinctions have received some criticism (see Slee & Weiner 1998; 2001) but they can be usefully applied to questions about inclusive schooling. For example, if inclusion is to be regarded as a measure of school effectiveness (as proposed by Ainscow, Booth and others), one might ask a series of related questions:

Do schools make a difference to inclusive outcomes?

What is the relative effect of schools on this issue, compared, for example with demography or wider social attitudes?

What are the characteristics of more inclusive/exclusive schools ?

What are the cultural correlates? What is the relative influence of head teachers or governors, compared with that of individual teachers/staff? And perhaps more fundamentally, to what extent/ in what respects are the correlates of inclusive practice similar to the correlates of school effectiveness as it is more usually defined?

What are the best ways of getting schools to become more inclusive?

For example, is it better to work with head teachers and governors, with individual teachers, or at the whole school level? What processes are the most effective? How far can change be driven internally, without recourse to external involvement? And again, more fundamentally, how far is current knowledge about broader aspects of school improvement generalisable to the development of inclusive practice?

Before considering each of these questions, reference will be made to the broader debate about school effects, school effectiveness and improvement, to provide a context for the more specific discussion.

2.2.1   Do schools make a difference ?

In his early review of the impact of schools, Coleman (1966) concluded that schools made little difference to pupil outcomes, compared to the broader effects of social and economic conditions. The first real challenge to this view came, in England, from Rutter

et al. (1979) who, using multiple regression techniques, identified a number of school factors (such as 'school ethos') as having a statistically significant impact on pupil outcomes (both academic and social/behavioural). Similar findings were reported by Edmonds (cit. Townsend 2001) in the USA.

The underlying implication of the Rutter research was that schools could make a positive difference, which could help compensate for the effects of poverty and other aspects of social disadvantage. However, some theorists (eg Oakes 1986) argued for a broader and more negative conception of 'school effects', where schools are seen as an (effective) means of maintaining the existing (inequitable) social order. This tradition can also be seen in the area of disability studies, where writers such as Barton and Oliver (1992) consider that schools, as currently structured, make a fundamental contribution to the development and maintenance of discriminatory attitudes. In Barnes' view, individual teachers and schools can have a positive effect on people's view of disability. However, they do so with difficulty, against a backdrop of a more potent 'school system' that exercises and reinforces institutional discrimination.

While there is no specific large-scale research on school effects on <u>inclusion</u>, there is evidence that schools do contribute to some of the variance in relation to non-attendance and formal exclusion (Parsons 1997).

2.2.2 School effectiveness: aspects of the broader debate

Since the 1970s, the literature on school effectiveness has burgeoned, with a range of attempts to isolate and identify critical features of schools that make them effective. Teddlie & Reynolds (2000) provide a comprehensive overview. In the UK, notions of school effectiveness have also caught the imagination of successive governments on both sides of the political divide.

The products of school effectiveness research have generally been lists of features associated with 'effective schools'. These tend to include (a) the quality of the school's leadership (b) the quality of teaching (c) the degree of focus on academic learning (d) a positive ethos/culture (d) high expectations (e) pupil/student responsibility (f) a balance of rewards and sanctions (g) school-level monitoring (h) opportunities for appropriate professional development (i) positive links with parents (see for example Teddlie & Reynolds 2000; Mortimore et al 1988).

Reynolds and others have argued that the 'school effectiveness movement' has empowered teachers and schools and has supported their self-belief: that they can (and do) make a difference. However critics have argued that the contribution of schools has been significantly over-stated and that the research literature has serious conceptual and methodological weaknesses. Moreover, in their view, there has been no serious attempt by those involved in this field to challenge the misuse of research findings by governments, which over-emphasise school effects and thus avoid tackling more complex, fundamental (and expensive) social issues.

In this context, critics point to the damaging effects brought about by oversimplistic applications of school effectiveness technology, particularly in the case of schools in socially deprived areas. Some would argue that, far from empowering and reinforcing teachers and schools, the concept of school effectiveness has been seen as an instrument of blame (eg Rea & Weiner 1998). It has become a tool for identifying and exposing underperformance, rather than a mechanism for supporting teachers and schools more positively in developing their practice. Gewirtz (1998), for example, quotes Barber's (1996) statement that *whereas, under the old order, there was a tendency to blame the system, society, the class structure -anyone other than the schools themselves – for underperformance, now there is no escape*.

School effectiveness research (SER) has come under attack from a number of quarters. The main criticisms can be summarised as follows (see Thrupp (2001) for a fuller discussion):

SER overstates school effects:
Estimates of the extent of the variance in pupil outcomes accounted for by schools range between 10 and 15%. Variance in outcomes is mainly accounted for by other variables (eg social-economic status (SES)). Teddlie & Reynolds (2001) acknowledge these figures, which are consistent with their own findings (Teddlie & Reynolds 2000). However, they argue that the extent of difference in outcomes between 'comparable schools' (ie those with similar demographic character) can be significant (particularly in the case of schools in 'low SES' areas). In their view, it is therefore a question of whether *'one looks at the glass as being 15% full or 85% empty'*.

Thrupp (2001) criticises the SER view that social/economic factors can be 'partialled out' through value-added approaches. In his view, this encourages underestimation of the significant effect that these factors have on outcomes. Coe & Fitz-Gibbon (1998) argue that this approach also defines the contribution of schools 'by default' (ie it assumes that school effects account for all the residual variance when intake factors have been removed). In practice, they argue, the residue might include a range of other factors than those proposed (eg differences in pupil motivation/self-esteem, that are over and above the differences determined by intake).

Correlation is confused with cause:
The statistical models used to arrive at the features of effective schools are essentially correlational. This means that, even if one accepts that 'good leadership' and 'effective teaching' correlate highly with better pupil outcomes, this does not inevitably imply a causal relationship. Such features could equally well be caused by other aspects of the pupil population that have not been accounted for (eg social composition). Or, alternatively, both pupil outcomes and identified school effectiveness 'characteristics' could be the product of other unidentified influences.

A number of authors (eg Gewirtz op.cit; Thrupp op.cit.) criticise SER for failing to look at 'social composition' effects – which are more amenable to qualitative study than the more usual statistical approaches. They argue that outcomes can be affected by the 'balance' of the school population and that even schools with similar socio-economic patterns can differ markedly in the nature of their pupils. There can also be different pupil and community 'cultures', which are not necessarily a product of school inputs.

At a broader methodological level, Goldstein & Woodhouse (2000) question whether a number of SER studies make appropriate use of (or make valid inferences from) the statistical models they employ. Coe & Fitz-Gibbon (op.cit) argue that this means undue emphasis is given to the influence of schools, as opposed to individual teachers (who, in their view, contribute most to such 'school effects')[10].

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[10] A more recent article by Muijs et al (2005) has suggested that school effectiveness research should also link more closely to particular roles and responsibilities within the school organisation, which may require different skills and attributes

SER ignores the 'micro-level' of school effectiveness:

A number of authors (eg Riddell et al. 1998) argue that SER has been too obsessed with 'school-level' influences and takes insufficient account of what happens at the level of teachers, pupils and classrooms. In their view, this leads to a 'top-down' model of school effectiveness, with insufficient recognition of the part played by individual members of staff. Teddlie & Reynolds (2001) acknowledge this issue and point out that SER studies are now starting to look at the teacher level, by accessing teacher perceptions and classroom observation.

More fundamentally, writers such as Ball (1987) argue that schools are complex micropolitical structures, which may not be adequately described by the more simplistic models of school effectiveness.

SER assumes that the same school effectiveness attributes apply to all types of school:

Coe & Fitz-Gibbon (1998) criticise what they describe as a '*linear*' or '*universal*' view about features of effective schools. They argue that, statistically, other relationships are possible – for example, 'inverted U' or 'threshold' models – whereby features work for some schools in some circumstances. Similar criticisms are made by Lauder et al (1998) who point to the shortcomings of both the 'Received Model' of school effectiveness (ie that proposed by Reynolds and colleagues) and the 'Heretical Model' (as proposed by Ball and others). In their view, a different model is needed (a 'Contextual Model') whereby school effectiveness is judged systematically but with reference to different school/ classroom contexts.

A number of critics point specifically to the differences between 'high SES' (or predominantly middle-class) schools and 'low SES' (those in socially deprived areas). Riddell et al. (1998) describes a number of ways in which such establishments differ and the implications these have for the ways in which teachers and pupils operate. Whitty et al (1998 – cit. Thrupp) describe the ways in which socially advantaged schools (referred to as '*autonomous self-improving agencies*') can maximise their advantages (eg through parental involvement/fund-raising activities and selection by popularity). Stoll & Myers (1998) address the particular issues faced by 'failing schools' in deprived areas and point out that these experience more significant challenges in terms of school management and improvement.

Teddlie & Reynolds (2001) accept that high SES/low SES schools may have '*different effectiveness correlates*'. However, they tend to see these working in an 'additive' way, with effective low SES schools having to address 'baseline conditions' through 'compensatory activity' before the main/ normal attributes of school effectiveness can be considered.

In judging effective and ineffective schools in different demographic areas, they also rely heavily on 'value-added' approaches (see above), arguing that these discriminate equally between effective and ineffective middle-class schools (that are 'coasting') and their counterparts in low SES areas.

SER uses too narrow a definition of pupil achievement:
This is a particularly significant criticism in the context of the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. Pupils who have learning or behavioural difficulties are unlikely to score highly on traditional academic measures – and yet these tend to be the yardsticks against which 'school effectiveness' is judged. While some studies do use a wider set of measures (eg social adjustment), these still tend to be normative. There is no account taken of a broader conception of educational, personal or social achievement.

Slee & Weiner (1998) argue that this encourages an exclusive model of school effectiveness, which is not linked to any social imperative to educate for diversity. Other authors (eg Thrupp (2001); Lingard et al. 1998) argue that SER should not (and cannot) dissociate itself from wider debates about educational goals or from the broader effects that school/education has on the way that society is structured.

SER is too closely connected with the prevailing political ethos:
Thrupp (2001) and others argue that the relationship between SER and the political agenda of successive Governments has become systemic. It is no longer just a case of SER findings being misused/used over-simplistically in Education policy. Rather, in the UK at least, a significant amount of SER activity has been funded (with high levels of resources) and led by the Government's agenda. In addition, a number of leading SER exponents such as Michael Barber and David Reynolds have held Government positions, the former as head of the Standards & Effectiveness Unit (at the DfES) and the latter as Chair of the National Numeracy Strategy Committee.

It is argued that these relationships restrict the focus of SER and prevent engagement with broader issues. In response, Reynolds has argued that SER in other countries is not affected by this political dimension (and yet comes to the same conclusions). In his view, the SER agenda is a pragmatic one (which may be more realistic in the current policy context than a broader agenda based on social and economic redistribution).

2.2.3 School effectiveness and inclusion: some key issues

The prevailing Government philosophy on inclusion has been to see school effectiveness and inclusion as entirely consistent. 'Good schools are inclusive schools'. This account predicts that the features generally associated with school effectiveness will also apply to the effective inclusion of children with special educational needs.

However, in their edited critique of prevailing approaches to school effectiveness research, Slee & Weiner (1998) ask the question '*School effectiveness for whom ?*'. They raise the possibility that not all 'effective schools' (as judged by traditional normative outcome measures – eg NC assessment results) are necessarily inclusive, or effective in terms of positive outcomes for the more vulnerable members of their community.

Lunt & Norwich (1999) explored this issue with a national survey of over 3000 state secondary schools in England. They divided these schools into ten groups based on GCSE performance levels and then compared this data with mean numbers of pupils (for schools in each group) with identified special educational needs[11]. The researchers found that schools with a high percentage of children with SEN were typically not the ones with higher GCSE performance. However, there was an interesting minority of schools that had both high GCSE performance and a high SEN percentage. Lunt & Norwich concluded that the relationship between school effectiveness and inclusion was not as straightforward as the Government suggested.

Subsequent research by Kalambouka et al (2005), and Farrell et al (2007) found no clear correlation (positive or negative) between school inclusivity and academic performance (see previous section for a more detailed discussion of this research).

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[11] Two different sets of SEN data were used: (a) the percentage of pupils at SEN Code of Practice stages 1-3 (as indicated on schools' DfES Form 7 returns), and (b) the percentage of pupils with statements. Comparisons were also made with aggregate figures.

One of the problems with using SEN incidence as a measure of inclusivity is that this tends to correlate highly with social disadvantage measures (McConville et al. 1993). The negative relationship between SEN and academic attainment found by Lunt & Norwich might therefore be picking up broader socio-economic issues, rather than any tensions between school effectiveness (as traditionally assessed) and inclusive practice. There is also considerable evidence of differences in levels of SEN 'registration' and numbers of statements between similar schools and local authorities in England. Some schools in socially disadvantaged areas push for statements to address perceived resourcing inequalities, or have high levels of registration to ensure that demographic context is taken into account in the way they are judged. Others are less inclined to register children as 'different' when they are used to working with this level of need on an ongoing basis. In practice, there is considerable reason to question how far numbers of 'registered' or statemented pupils are a reliable indicator of 'inclusion' (that can be used objectively and comparatively).

Interestingly, some of the most searching challenges to the relationship between school effectiveness 'knowledge' and inclusive practice are raised by Reynolds himself (1995). He begins by validating the emphasis on 'whole school policies' (for SEN and inclusion) as being consistent with SER's view of the school as a unit of change. However he identifies a number of issues that mean that 'effective schools' may not be inclusive ones. He points to the potential divergence between positive academic and social outcomes, quoting Mortimore et al's (1988) finding that only 16 out of 50 primary schools were good at achieving both. He also acknowledges that different groups of pupils can be affected by schools in different ways, with children with SEN (and those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds) being most sensitive to variation in the quality of the school environment. In summary, he writes,

> *'one of the most favoured beliefs of the 'integrational enterprise' may be difficult to validate. Whole-school policies may not be productive of changed classroom experiences for children with special needs. Schools may be involved in complex 'trade-offs' in which certain goals have to be maximised (academic ones), which may lead to deficiencies in the attainment of goals in other areas...Different subgroups of pupils may be advantaged differently by different ways of running schools. Schools cannot even be told from research what the ways are of maximising the social outcomes so appropriate to children with special educational needs. Schools that have higher proportions of children with SEN*

may well be the least able to progress their children and may, if this is true, be the least able to change their organisational functioning.' (p.120)[12]

So, are the correlates of 'effective' and 'inclusive' schools similar? In their study of the effectiveness of school-level actions for promoting participation/inclusion, Dyson and colleagues (EPPI 2002) carried out a comprehensive literature search of all relevant studies. Out of over 14,500 citations, they only found 27 example of empirical research that could help answer this question. They found

> *'confusion around the issue.....many competing definitions of inclusive education....(and) a difficulty in much of the literature in disentangling the advocacy of more inclusive approaches from the evidence as to how such approaches can be sustained and what their consequences are for students'.*

In summarising the conclusions from the valid studies, they emphasise the importance of an '*inclusive culture*', involving *'some degree of consensus amongst adults around values of respect for difference and a commitment to offering all students access to learning opportunities*'. They point out that *'such consensus may not be total and may not necessarily remove all tensions or contradictions in practice'.* In their view, the available research suggests that 'inclusive cultures' are likely to be characterised by *'the presence of leaders who are committed to inclusive values and to a leadership style which encourages a range of individuals to participate in leadership functions*'. In addition, they report that inclusive schools are also likely to have good links with parents and their local communities.

There is some overlap between features associated by SER with effective schools and those linked to inclusive schooling (for example, the contribution of leadership, shared vision and goals, parental/community involvement: see also Ainscow 1995) - although there is an emphasis more on participative/cooperative working (as opposed to top-down management). However, as Mittler (1999) argues,

> *'although many of these criteria (SER correlates) could be described as 'inclusion-friendly', they are in fact blandly neutral when it comes to the core of inclusion, namely the reorganisation of structures and curricula to ensure that they meet the needs of all pupils''* (p.75).

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[12] Interestingly, towards the end of his chapter, Reynolds cites evidence from the international SER literature that countries with better educational performance outcomes tend to be ones where schools/ teachers are expected to address both ends of the academic continuum. In his view, the main barriers to 'including' SEN within concepts of school effectiveness in the UK are due to continuing ambiguities about responsibility.

Moreover, as Reynolds (1995) points out, there is the key question about the relative priority of inclusive values for individual head teachers, governors and staff, when these are weighed up against the more pragmatic agenda of being seen to be effective in more traditional (exam-related) terms. As Dyson and colleagues recognise, *'the local and national policy environment can act to support or to undermine the realisation of schools' inclusive values'*.

A key issue here, in the context of an education culture dominated by formal inspection and external judgement, is the degree to which 'inclusive values' are seen as part of the way in which school performance is assessed. The framework of OfSTED inspections has progressively been altered to involve some assessment of inclusive practice and school response to vulnerability, but there remain doubts about the weighting that this aspect of school performance is given in practice against other expectations and demands (see Lamb Inquiry report 2009).

2.2.4 School improvement: how do schools become more effective?

Harris (2000) provides an overview of school improvement research and activity since the 1980s. The International School Improvement Project (ISIP), carried out between 1982-1986, led to a rejection of the more traditional 'top-down' 'mechanistic' approaches to school improvement that had characterised the previous decade. Instead, it was decided that school improvement best happened organically, through a process of school-based review and self-evaluation (Hopkins 1987). A number of elements began to be articulated, such as:

(i) the need to agree and establish shared aims and values

(ii) the need to recognise/take account of the existing context/'internal conditions' (and build on these)

(iii) the need to involve staff as active participants in the process of change and build on individuals' particular strengths

(iv) the need to address change at a number of different levels

(v) the importance of setting a manageable agenda (that recognised the need for both development and maintenance activity)

(vi) the importance of 'coherence' and 'consonance' across the development programme

(vii) the value of data in 'energising' change (and the benefits of making this available)

(viii) the need to establish the role of external support (and use this effectively)

Hopkins & Reynolds (2001) have indicated the directions and emphases that, in their view, might characterise the next stage ('3rd age') of school improvement research, with greater interest in how change might be achieved/experienced at the individual teacher level and further exploration of the concept of 'capacity building'. Harris (2001) has also pointed to the need to examine how improvements can best be managed at a middle management/departmental level.

Hargreaves (2001) has advocated the use of 'low input' models of school improvement, which, in his view, can have the highest 'leverage'. By contrast, high input approaches can lead to '*exhausted frustration*' or '*short term effectiveness and burnout*'.

Bennett & Harris (1999) comment on the apparent divide between school improvement research, with its emphasis on cultural change, collaboration and values, and the field of SER, which adopts a more technical/rational view of schools as organisations (and tends to focus on management/structural change). They use the concept of 'power' to try to help unify the two fields theoretically. Hopkins & Harris (1997) proposed 3 types of strategies, depending on the 'condition' of individual schools, as follows:

Type1: ('failing schools')
(i)   high level of external support/intervention
(ii)   focus on a limited number of basic curriculum/organisational issues

Type 2: ('moderately effective' schools – that could be better)
(i)   build existing capacity
(ii)   refine development priorities
(iii)   focus on specific issues
(iv)   some external support commissioned by schools, if desired (but not necessary)

Type 3: (effective schools – that want to stay so)
(i)   more of the same
(ii)   external support, if desired, through consortium/peer supervision

In their view, the optimal (self-managing) approach to school improvement needs to be set on one side, where particular schools are below a certain performance threshold. In such circumstances, a more 'interventionist' model needs to be applied. There are striking parallels between this model of school improvement and the approach adopted (for both schools and local authorities) by the Government's Standards & Effectiveness Unit.

At a more general level, authors such as Hopkins and Reynolds have started to acknowledge that different types of strategy may be appropriate for different types of school (for example, those in socially-disadvantaged/low SES areas). An increasing range of evidence suggests that schools seeking to improve in such areas have a different range of challenges, which cannot be accommodated by the 'standard' school improvement approach. Above all, it is starting to be recognised that change in such schools is not 'easy' (see Stoll & Myers 1998).

Woods & Levacic (2002) point to the effects of '*local school hierarchies*' when analysing 'barriers to responsiveness' in three disadvantaged schools,. Once a school has been negatively labelled (eg as a 'failing school'), there are profound effects on both staff and pupils. On the basis of a broader analysis of school performance, they concluded that schools find it easier to improve when their levels of social disadvantage are low, relative to other schools in the local area, or where they are starting from a very low base, in terms of GCSE results.

Coe & Fitz-Gibbon (1998) question the assumption that schools are always responsible for (or can influence) their own 'effectiveness'. For example, to some extent, very low scores on normative measures are bound to improve through 'regression to the mean'- a statistical truth, rather than the necessary product of school improvement. Moreover, the 'improvement' of a school may result from a change in community perceptions, rather than because of the processes described in school improvement research. It may also result from a change in intake.

Gewirtz (1998) raises the question '*Can all schools be successful ?*'. The SER view (mirrored to some extent by the school improvement literature) tends to assume that school effectiveness/improvement is caused by definable attributes or processes. In Gewirtz's view, the relationship may be the other way round. In her examination of two

neighbouring schools (in a socially disadvantaged area), one popular, one with a poor reputation, she concluded that it is more likely that the school's reputation (and intake) determines what teachers and managers can do. Schools with more reasonable intakes (and better reputations) may have more time (and emotional energy) to plan and review their practice. In her view, the 'logical' response for managers of 'unsuccessful' schools (when attempting to meet existing external expectations) is to try to alter the balance of their intake, which is best achieved by increasing the number of pupils on roll, through effective public relations and other means (or, by replacing some pupils through selective exclusion). However, Gewirtz argues, while this may lead to improvement for that particular school, it is likely to pass the 'problem' on elsewhere[13].

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that short-term improvements (which are often at the time well-publicized as examples of the effectiveness of new leaders ('superheads')) are not always sustained. Coe & Fitz-Gibbon (1998) argue that school improvement research should engage in longer-term evaluation, to see how change is best achieved (and maintained) over time.

2.2.5 School improvement and inclusion: a clear relationship ?

A clear link between the literature on school improvement and the development of inclusive schooling is provided by Mel Ainscow and colleagues at Manchester University. As well as having a background in the theory and practice of special needs education and inclusion, Ainscow was also, while at Cambridge University, a member of the IQEA (Improving the Quality of Education for All) project that was coordinated by David Hopkins and others during the 1990s. The key findings of the IQEA project are summarised in Hopkins & Harris (1997).

In negotiating their involvement with schools, the IQEA project team set out a number of expectations to which head teachers and others were expected to adhere. These included an agreement to the participatory/collaborative nature of the endeavour. They also included a commitment to a vision that included all members of the school community (whatever their learning needs) – in other words, a commitment to

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[13] This view is supported by a more recent study by Barker (2007). Schools with 'transformational school leaders', did not necessarily show significant gains in pupil attainment. 'Improvements' were more likely to be linked to changes in 'background variables' (such as intake and image). Similar conclusions have been drawn by Gorard (2005) in his evaluation of academies.

developing a good quality education for a diverse population (embodying the broader concept of inclusion that he and others had previously described).

It might therefore be expected that the processes of school improvement identified through IQEA should be equally applicable to the processes required for the development of more inclusive education. A number of these match closely the products of the ISIS project listed earlier. Returning to that list, one can see how a number of similar features might apply, for example:

(i) the need to agree shared vision and values:
Staff would need to agree the meaning and importance of inclusion and recognise their responsibility to 'educate for diversity'.

(ii) the need to take account of existing context/internal conditions:
The school would need to look at existing strengths and the issues/challenges currently experienced, before planning improvements.

(iii) the need to involve staff as active participants:
Inclusive education also means an 'inclusive management approach'.

(iv) the importance of addressing change at different levels:
Inclusion needs to be based on a 'whole school approach' (across all aspects of the system).

(v) the value of data in energising change:
Data could be collected on numbers of pupils excluded (compared with other similar schools), numbers not attending/on roll (eg placed in some form of special provision), or categorised as 'different'. Surveys of pupil views on participation could also be undertaken.

(vi) the need to review the role/contribution of external support:
This might include the contribution of inspectors/advisers as well as the role of services more specifically linked to pupils with SEN.

In a number of respects, the Index for Inclusion (Ainscow et al. 2000) falls within the tradition of supported self-review, involving the kinds of processes identified within the IQEA/ISIS approach.

A key issue, however, raised by Bennett & Harris (1999) and others, is the degree to which schools in the IQEA sample were, by definition, committed to developing more inclusive practice[14]. Other schools may not be, and may require alternative strategies for school improvement to those that tend to be proposed.

Hopkins & Harris (1997) have emphasised the need for improving schools to ensure developments are 'congruent' with national and local expectations and to see external pressures as 'opportunities'. It is by no means clear, however, that any 'pressures' to work more inclusively are of the same order as the pressures to secure higher exam pass rates or to satisfy Ofsted inspectors on other dimensions of school performance. At present, as Reynolds (1995) indicated, there are tensions. For example, there is strong evidence that schools seen as 'failing' are encouraged to adopt a narrower/more didactic and less child-centred approach to curriculum and teaching, that may be less sensitive to diversity (see Gewirtz 1998; Dyson 2001). There is also a stronger emphasis in 'failing schools' on the importance of top-down management (rather than collaborative teams).

In the light of the uncertain relationship between 'inclusion' and 'school quality' (as more narrowly defined), it may be important to explore how 'improvement' best occurs in different scenarios, as exemplified in Table 2 (below):

Table 2: **Promoting achievement *and* inclusion: scenarios for broader improvement:**

	High including	**Low including**
Low attaining	How to improve attainment without compromising inclusive values	How to decide priorities with limited capacity/energy/strengths
High attaining	How to maintain good practice on both dimensions and generalise to other types of schools	How to challenge schools whose 'quality' has been externally validated

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[14] Although subsequent samples used by Ainscow and colleagues have been more diverse and 'unexceptional' (including some that have been the object of negative school inspections), they have still involved 'volunteers' who have been committed to developing participation and responding to diversity (Ainscow et al 2003)

Raffo & Gunter (2008) have pointed to the difficulties experienced by school leaders in promoting a broader social inclusion agenda, when this is defined narrowly ('functionally') at national level. In their view, adopting a broader 'social equity' agenda requires 'pragmatism combined with confidence' and 'politically active local leadership'. More recently, there has been some national endorsement of the need for new forms of leadership that are linked to a broader social agenda (eg NCSL 2006; West-Burnham et al 2007). However, this development still tends to be functionally legitimated as part of the Government's attempts to raise the attainments of the 'intransigent few' who stand in the way of achieving national improvement targets.

In a review of some of their more recent work with schools on developing inclusive practice, Ainscow, Booth & Dyson (2006) have argued that this needs to take account of the 'reality' of the national policy context. In their view:

> *'A radical shift in national policies, however desirable, is unlikely until, perhaps, the contradictions become even more evident between market-driven ideologies and the desire of large sections of the population for an equitable high quality education in decent neighbourhoods for all children. We suggest, therefore, that the effort of those concerned to put inclusive values into action cannot be directed only at the radical critique of educational policies, important as such critiques will continue to be. Rather, we must also concentrate on trying to expand the inclusive aspects of current policy and support teachers to take greater control over their own development'* (p.306)

They see this as best achieved by collaborative networking between 'insiders' (school staff) and 'outsiders' (research staff and local authority advisers), with a focus on reflective practice aimed at reducing barriers, responding to diversity, and promoting rights, equity and participation, but with a recognition of the narrower emphasis on the 'business of teaching'[15]. In their experience, the processes of networking and guided reflection act as a 'pull' in an inclusive direction, even where the starting points are relatively constrained.

At this stage, it is important to note two aspects of their conclusions: firstly, the emphasis on context in the development of inclusive schooling, and secondly, the involvement of external agencies in helping change school practice.

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[15] Florian (2008) has a similar focus on 'inclusion in action' in her overview of recent studies by her Cambridge University colleagues (eg Hart, McLaughlin and others)

To what extent is the development of more inclusive education dependent on outside/external involvement – or is change in this area inevitably self-generated? This issue will be explored in the next part of this review, which looks at the contribution of local authorities and support services.

2.3   The contribution of local authorities and support services

A similar structure can be used to examine local authority influences as that used for schools in the previous part of this review. This can be summarised as follows (see Table 3 below):

Table 3:   A structure for examining local authority influences on outcomes and inclusion (after Teddlie & Reynolds 2000)

	Outcomes (academic/other)	Inclusion
Effects	What evidence is there that local authorities have an impact on outcomes, at school or pupil level ? What is the nature of these effects on different kinds of school/types and levels of pupil need ?	What evidence is there that local authorities have an impact on inclusion, in terms of school practice/attitudes and the successful experience of individual children ?
Effectiveness	What are the characteristics of authorities that <u>are</u> effective in achieving these outcomes ?	What are the characteristics of 'inclusive local authorities' – in terms of their practice and culture ?
Improvement	How do local authorities contribute to improving outcomes at school or individual pupil/group level, in different circumstances/contexts ?	How do local authorities contribute to the development of inclusion, at the individual pupil, school and Area level ?

By contrast to the literature on school effectiveness and improvement, there is very little written about the nature and level of impact of local authorities, either on inclusion or more broadly. Although the Government expects them to make a difference (and measures their performance against each other and national targets), it is difficult to disentangle this expectation from a broader policy view, which has continued to be ambivalent about their role and contribution.

2.3.1   Local authority effects on schools:

Government expects local authorities (LAs) to impact on school effectiveness and improvement through 'support and challenge'. This role has tended to be limited to ensuring schools meet appropriate targets in relation to 'attainment and standards', with the general rule of 'intervention in inverse proportion to 'success'' (the legitimacy of

LA involvement in higher attaining schools, whether or not these are inclusive, is less clear). More recently, the agenda has extended to monitoring school performance in relation to the attainments of nationally identified 'vulnerable groups' (e.g. looked after children; African-Caribbean boys) and some aspects of the new ECM agenda (non-attendance; healthy eating; bullying).

LA 'performance' in fulfilling this role has typically been judged by school results in their area (which was a major criterion for LA quality in the Audit Commission's CPA (comprehensive performance assessment) framework: Audit Commission 2002). This typically led to more affluent Authorities being given higher ratings because of the social composition of their populations, and poorer Authorities being criticised for not making a big enough contribution to raising standards in their schools[16].

Local Authorities were also judged on the number of schools having negative inspections and on their success in helping bring schools out of 'special measures'. Some would argue that the role of the Local Authority school improvement adviser has narrowed considerably during this period, with a shift to a more data-based 'monitor and chide' function, as opposed to a broader involvement in school quality and teaching and learning. This has been partly reinforced by the 'semi-nationalisation/privatisation' of school improvement services, through the creation of SIPs (school improvement partners) who undergo a prescriptive training that is heavily linked to the Government's standards agenda.

There is limited research on LA effects on school attainment levels. However, a recent large-scale study by Tymms et al (2008) found no clear evidence that local authorities make a difference to pupil academic outcomes in the primary school phase. Their contribution to the variance for the period studied was less than 1%. As the authors acknowledge, it is difficult to interpret this finding. It could signify limited impact ('local authority actions are too remote to exert leverage' or they have limited capacity) or it could be a consequence of the degree of national homogeneity in modern school improvement activity.

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[16] This was not always the case. Some poorer Authorities were positively assessed particularly if their CPA/OfSTED inspection coincided with a period of 'regression to the mean' (see Coe & Fitz-Gibbon above).

2.3.2   Local authority effects on broader outcomes

There have been few other national studies that have set out to differentiate 'local authority' from 'school-level' effects. However, the relatively new system of identifying each local authority 'statistical neighbours' enables some comparisons to be made at that level (for example, in relation to non-attendance, formal exclusions and broader ECM data). These suggest some local authority-level 'effects' but it is difficult to ascertain how far these reflect local authority practices/culture, particular demographic characteristics or the specific features of individual schools (which can make significant difference to local authority data in smaller areas).

One criticism of local authorities over the years has been that they have given insufficient priority to evaluating the outcomes of their activity, especially at individual child/family level (cf Axford et al 2005). In this context, it can be difficult to identify effects other than anecdotally. With the advent of integrated children's services in England, the range of outcomes to which local authorities are expected to contribute has risen exponentially.

2.3.3   Local authority effects on inclusion

CSIE (2002; 2005) and national government data show significant variation in the percentage of children placed in special schools by different Authorities. In 2004, this ranged from 1.46% of the 0-19 population in South Tyneside to 0.06% in the London Borough of Newham. Although these statistics have been collected for nearly 20 years, there has never been a detailed analysis of reasons behind this variation.

An examination of the list of Authorities with low percentages suggests some demographic differences (for example, a number of rural counties: Cornwall, Cumbria, Herefordshire, Suffolk have consistently been in the top 15 'includers'). A number of Authorities with high percentages are urban areas with high population density and usually significant social disadvantage[17]. This trend is consistent with Meijer's findings from a study of integration in 14 European countries which led him to conclude that demography was a major predictor of local and national variance (Meijer 1998)

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[17] The difference is usually explained by the practical and cost implications of transporting children long distances in rural areas to centre-based provision, compared with the relative accessibility of special schools in areas that are geographically compact.

On the other hand, the list of local authorities contains some significant anomalies. For example, Newham, Nottingham and Barnsley (urban centres with relatively high levels of social disadvantage) have consistently been in the 'top 10 includers' while some southern shire counties have had a much higher special school percentage than a number of urban centres in the Midlands and north of England[18]. This suggests that there are other reasons for differences in local authority practice and culture than those that derive simply from demographic characteristics.

2.3.4   Local authority 'inclusivity' and effects on school standards

The tension identified previously in this review between inclusion and standards is also relevant to the LA level. There is concern that a local authority 'push' for greater inclusion in mainstream schools may compromise the agenda to increase attainment levels (for the majority of pupils). Farrell et al (2007) in their national research on this issue found no evidence that school standards were worse (or better) in 'inclusive LAs' (see also Dessent – personal communication).

2.3.5   Characteristics of effective local authorities

Again, research in this area is very limited. Constructs of effectiveness are very much determined by the nature and focus of individual local authority inspections. These tend to be based on a combination of statistical data (in some areas where there is unclear evidence of local authority influence and control), 'documentary evidence', (limited) user samples and generalised theories of organisational effectiveness (leadership etc), which tend to be judged by the popularity and presentation of senior officers. Longer-term study of the broader effectiveness of local authorities is also more difficult as a result of the significant changes in structure and role that have occurred during a relatively short space of time. Unlike schools, local authorities may no longer have a 'cumulative tradition'.

2.3.6   Characteristics of local authorities that are 'inclusive':

No systematic evaluation has been carried out in England. However, some attempts have been made to produce a local authority equivalent of the Index for Inclusion, through the work of the Eastern SEN Regional Partnership[19] (2002) and, more recently,

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[18] In a study of the use of special school provision by London Boroughs, significant differences were also found (Gray 2006), which could not be predicted simply by levels of disadvantage.
[19] This work was subsequently extended by Suffolk County Council (McDonald and Olley 2002) to cover broader aspects of local authority activity.

CSIE (2009). These tend to focus on local authority attributes and practices that are considered to be associated with inclusive outcomes. They are generally based on the 'pooled wisdom' of local authority practitioners/managers, with a less clearly established evidence base.

A more substantial study carried out by Meijer and colleagues across 17 European countries (Meijer 1999) found that inclusion at Area level was linked to the approach taken to the funding of support and provision for special educational needs. Segregation was higher when this approach was based on an 'input' model (funding allocated on the basis of individual pupil characteristics) than when 'output' (funding by results) or 'throughput' (funding of processes) models were used. Segregation tended to be lower in Areas where the financial costs of special provision and services were more 'visible' to ordinary schools at local level.

A more qualitative approach was adopted by Croll and Moses (2000a; 2000b) who reflected on the limited progress made nationally in reducing segregation during the 1980s and 1990s. In a detailed study of eleven local authorities, they found significant variation in levels of inclusion (defined in terms of percentages of children in special provision). Officers in most of these authorities espoused the ideal of inclusion. However, their practice sometimes led in a different direction. Croll and Moses drew on the work of Levitas (1990) who distinguished between different forms of 'utopian thinking'. They suggested that one form of utopianism involves a generalised desire for a better world, with no real commitment to seeing this through. Another is constructed to allow a critique of existing systems (without a clear programme for change). A third form involves 'hope' as well as desire – ie a real aspiration to achieve change and a commitment to see this through in practice.

Their research differentiated between those LEAs where significant progress had been made towards greater inclusion/mainstream access and those where there had been little change. They suggested that a major factor was whether inclusion was a hope or just a generalised desire. Drawing a parallel with the work of Cuban (1997), they concluded that the existing special school 'system' was highly resistant to change but that real progress towards inclusion could still be achieved if there was sufficient belief and commitment from key individuals. They argued that this probably required a radical

rather than incremental approach, which was likely to be easier to implement in smaller authorities.

Croll & Moses' research implies that local authorities <u>can</u> (and do) have an effect on inclusion, but only where there is significant (and untypical) commitment from individual officers/politicians. However, in their published accounts, there is little detailed analysis of the contextual differences between local authorities that may facilitate or inhibit change. Some contexts may make it easier for (less committed) officers to achieve progress. Others may be more challenging even for the most committed individuals.

In responding to Croll & Moses' account, Thomas & Tarr 1999) have also pointed to the limitations in the use of segregation statistics to assess progress towards inclusion, as it is now more broadly defined.

2.3.7   Local authorities role in improvement

There is a limited literature on how local authorities contribute to improving outcomes at both school and individual pupil level. A recent NFER study for the Local Government Association (Keating, Marshall & Rudd 2009) found that most school improvement activity was 'non-statutory', with a range of 'challenge and support' activity, depending on the circumstances of each school. There was substantial use of school performance data (typically attainment-related) and 'capacity-building' through local authority and peer support. The 'success' of this approach was based on the reports of local authority officers, head teachers and SIPs (school improvement partners), with no systematic evaluation of effectiveness of different approaches at individual school level.

At individual pupil level, local authority support services maintain an increasing range of process and outcome data. However, service evaluations tend not to bring this together in published form.

2.3.8   How local authorities become more inclusive ?

In a response to the Government's Green Paper and Programme of Action in 1997, Moore (1998, 1999) argued that, despite generalised exhortations to improve, *'local authorities are, for the most part, left to their own devices, and it should be no surprise*

if, in time there are as many interpretations and responses to inclusion as there are ways of describing SEN'. He set out a number of dimensions that local authorities would need to consider.

Although the Government did not specifically require local authorities to develop strategies for inclusion in this legislation, OfSTED produced two reports in 2001 and 2002 that were highly critical of local authority 'performance' in this area (OfSTED 2002). Judgements were made about lack of leadership, excessive and indecisive consultation, and an inability to develop a consensus across the range of stakeholders. The model of change adopted in the OfSTED reviews was essentially a linear one, and perhaps underestimated the level of resistance to change outlined by Croll & Moses (above). A fully inclusive approach might suggest a consensual method of change, with all stakeholders feeling 'included' in the process. However, retrospective accounts of developing inclusion in practice indicate the need for active leadership and persistence in the face of potentially vociferous opposition (eg Jordan and Goodey 1991; Gray and Dessent 1993; Leyden & Leyden in press). Some would also argue that OfSTED overestimated the degree of influence that local authorities could be expected to have over schools that had become increasingly autonomous.

A different approach has since been reported by Ainscow and colleagues (Ainscow & Tweddle 2003; Ainscow et al 2000). Commenting on changes in the national context during the 1990s, they argue:

> '*So fundamental has been the reform of the education service, and so significant have been the reductions in the powers of the LEA, that the question may now be asked: 'Do LEAs any longer have the capacity to make a difference ?'*

They go on to say:

> '*Our own research indicates that, in terms of the promotion of inclusive policies and practices, significant differences exist between 'similar' LEAs, and that these differences, at least in part, are due to strategic planning and policy decisions taken at LEA level*'

They propose a 'new paradigm' for development that is built around collaboration between local authorities and schools, and between groups of local authorities engaged in a process of 'peer-supported self-review'. This extends the model for improvement outlined previously from school to local authority level. Linking to their work with a

consortium of six LEAs in the North West of England, they summarise a number of 'levers' that can help LEAs become more inclusive, as follows:

(i) *Definition:* clear and agreed understanding of 'inclusion' across wide range of stakeholders

(ii) *Leadership:* the need for a clear and consistent vision to be articulated 'from the top'

(iii) *Attitudes:* the need for the organisation to be positive and solution-focused, and committed to identifying and removing barriers to inclusion in schools

(iv) *Policies, planning and processes:* the link between policies and planning/processes

(v) *Structures, roles and responsibilities:* the link between policies and structure/coordination

(vi) *Funding:* the need for adequate funding levels/appropriate funding model to support inclusion

(vii) *Support and challenge:* how the LA supports and challenges schools in relation to inclusion

(viii) *Response to diversity:* the link with other areas of marginalisation/social exclusion

(ix) *Specialist provision:* match between provision and need, so that this supports inclusion

(x) *Partnerships:* level of cooperation between the LA and schools, and other agencies

(xi) *Use of evidence:* evidence collected/used to evaluate progress towards more inclusive practice

(xii) *Staff development/training:* range/quality/appropriateness of CPD opportunities

It is difficult to assess how far these features are 'aspirational' or supported by evidence of successful change within the Authorities concerned. The authors assert the primacy of the <u>definition</u> element, which is needed to evaluate progress, but subsequent reports (eg Ainscow, Booth & Dyson 2006) suggest that evaluation criteria have tended to focus on pupil participation and achievement in schools. There is less clear evidence of progress in terms of children's access to mainstream schools (the 'presence' dimension).

The kinds of collaborative network advocated by Ainscow et al are similar to those developed within a number of the Government's SEN regional partnerships before these were disbanded. There is some evidence that, although these were valued by local authorities themselves, transfer of good practice was limited by contextual differences. Gray & Dearden (2008) have argued that effective transfer requires a process of external 'mediation' and 'contextual analysis' to help identify those aspects of practice that can be successfully generalised/adapted to different local authority settings.

2.3.9   The contribution of local authority SEN support services

The post Warnock era in the UK witnessed a significant expansion in the size and range of local authority SEN support services, with support being provided across the full continuum of special educational needs (the 2% and the 18%). During the 1980s, there was a substantial literature in this area, partly written by academics (eg Gipps et al 1987; Moses et al 1988) and partly by practitioners themselves. There were debates around the focus of support service activity (whole school or individual pupil?), the nature of the role (direct support or advisory ?), and their organisational structure (balance between generic vs specialist functions; managerial arrangements). Some authors also began to raise issues around the success of external services in promoting inclusion (eg Goodwin 1983; Dessent 1987), as opposed to acting as a 'conduit' for additional demand.

The literature since then has been more limited, perhaps for the following reasons:

(i)   since the advent of self-governing schools in the late 1980s, there have been increasing restrictions on the amount of funding local authorities are able to retain centrally. This has led to significant reductions in the size of services/teams (particularly for 'high incidence' needs such as general learning/behaviour difficulties).

(ii)   there has been a tendency for support teams to be more specialist (eg for hearing/visually-impaired; autism; dyslexia) and to be less generic in their interest/outlook[20]

(iii)   increasing workload pressures have reduced the likelihood of practitioner publication

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[20] Educational psychology services have also worked increasingly as 'discrete teams', with separate training routes and professional literature

As has already been suggested, the shift in emphasis within discussions of inclusion has also led to greater academic interest in the development of practice from the school/classroom teacher point of view. At a more radical level, authors such as Vislie (2003) and Vlachou (2006) have argued that support teachers constitute an ongoing barrier to the development of broader school ownership of inclusion. In their view, either consciously or unconsciously, they contribute to the maintenance of the 'special education discourse', through the process of individual identification, categorisation of need, focus on deficits, and specialist responsibility.

Emanuelsson (2001), in an international comparison of the support teacher contribution, points to the 'dilemmas' faced by this group of professionals, some of whom may seek to promote inclusion and broader ownership but encounter pressures to work in more reactive ways. Even a more developmental role can become construed as support teachers having responsibility for accomplishing more inclusive practice 'on their own'. Emanuelsson is less judgemental about support teacher motivation, but points to the possibility that inclusion can be compromised by individuals' concern to maintain an image of 'specialist expertise'[21].

To some extent, the issues raised by Emanuelsson can be seen as variants of the 'dilemmas' identified by Norwich (see earlier in this review). One can be described as a further dilemma of identification: whether and how to identify particular staff as having a specific/specialist role. The other could be seen as a 'management' dilemma: whether to maintain any staff who are not directly managed by schools and how these should be organised.

One way of 'resolving' the management dilemma is the use of internal Teacher Support Teams (Chisholm 1994, Hanko 1995, Creese et al 2006), in which the role of external support services (if any) is typically facilitative. Within the recent professional educational psychology literature, there has also been an emphasis on 'coaching' and 'consultation' (eg Monsen & Cameron 2002; Wagner 2000), with an accompanying view that this approach reinforces 'problem ownership' and strengthens schools' ability to find their own solutions. The advantages of these approaches have tended to be

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[21] One of the issues with drawing conclusions from comparative studies is that professional roles and structures vary in different countries. As Soriano (1999) has pointed out, the meaning of the term 'support teacher' differs, at least across Europe, with an emphasis in some countries on roles that would be fulfilled in England internally by mainstream school staff (SEN coordinators).

drawn through contrast with more traditional (psychometric assessment) practices, which are seen as reinforcing deficit models and 'disownership' by teachers. There is less clear evidence that they produce positive benefits in themselves, for example in promoting inclusive practice and better pupil outcomes. As Kennedy et al (2008) point out, this is partly due to the breadth of definition of what counts as 'consultation', and partly to continuing mismatches between 'espoused theory' and 'theory in practice' (Argyris & Schon 1974).

Other authors have argued that external support services play an important role in strengthening and reinforcing mainstream 'ownership' when this is most under threat. This is particularly the case with pupils who present significantly challenging behaviour, where a range of adult emotions can come into play. External support can be particularly valuable, particularly if these emotions and their impact are properly acknowledged and addressed (Gray & Noakes 1994; Fell 2002; Gray 2002a). In his research on successful behaviour interventions in mainstream schools, Miller (1996) concluded that the involvement of external support services can also allow the redrawing of boundaries that can negatively affect the relationships between parents and teachers, so that there is more freedom to move away from 'tried and tested' (and ineffective) practices.

In view of the need to promote the development of inclusion *and* reinforce school ownership in relation to individual pupils, Gray (1999) argued for a dual support service role:

> *'The key task is to divide our time effectively between two priorities: 1) achieving whole school development and 2) focusing our individual pupil support on those children with the most severe and complex needs. It may still be appropriate to develop schools through joint work with individual pupils or groups, but we need to judge the effectiveness of such inputs at a whole school level (in terms of longer-term skill transfer or curriculum/system adjustments)'*

The debate about the need to retain central support service capacity in order to ensure positive progress towards greater inclusion was the backdrop to a national research project carried out by the current author (Gray 2001, 2002b, 2004), which was jointly commissioned by the Government and NASEN (National Association for Special Educational Needs). The key issue at that time was whether increased Government demands to delegate central local authority funding to schools would compromise or

support the inclusion agenda. The research highlighted two 'positions' on this issue: the first, that support services were 'custodians of pupil entitlement' (to a good quality mainstream education) and, without them, inclusion would be put at risk; the second that they were 'agents of dependence' who helped diminish school ownership and responsibility.

The role and contribution of support services in this policy context was investigated through a national survey (questionnaire to all English local authorities) and a small number of detailed local authority case studies. The findings suggested the following:

1) An external input was beneficial in promoting inclusive developments at local authority level, and in circumstances where schools were less inclined to 'own' responsibility (particular schools needing challenge; particular types of need)

2) Local authorities were needing to manage delegation strategically to ensure that transfer of money was accompanied by appropriate developments in mainstream ownership (delegation did not achieve this alone).

3) With reduced central capacity, local authorities were needing to be clearer about the role and focus (and organisation) of SEN support teams, and about their expectations of schools.

4) It was proving difficult for some local authorities to impact on the development of inclusion, particularly where there needed to be significant shifts in mainstream expectations and there was very limited capacity to influence these.

2.4   Implications of the literature review for the current research:

The review demonstrates how evolving concepts of inclusion present a relatively idealised picture, where developments are seen as predominantly 'school-led'. This picture is contrasted with the earlier era of 'integration' where children were 'imposed' on mainstream schools with limited expectations of organisational change, and ownership/responsibility remained with external agencies. The literature on school effectiveness and improvement raises questions as to how far this picture is accurate or attainable, particularly in a context where national policy on inclusion appears relatively ambiguous and the continuing emphasis is on narrower academic standards.

Some commentators are relatively pessimistic about the prospects for moving forward under the current policy conditions (marketisation of education; limited commitment to

broader social reform). Others see more room for development at individual school and local authority level, even though progress may involve a number of compromises to the inclusion 'ideal'.

There remain a number of questions about the degree to which agencies external to schools can and should influence developments. Research evidence on this issue remains relatively limited, which provides some validation for the current research endeavour. The work of Croll & Moses (op.cit) suggests that local authorities can and do have an impact on inclusion, but need individual leaders who are highly committed to achieving this agenda in practice. In their experience, this is unusual. In some respects, this places authorities in an 'all or nothing' position, with limited likelihood of more incremental change. An alternative model would see local authorities as lying on more of a continuum, with an interaction between the strength of individual commitment and a number of contextual factors that might facilitate or inhibit change. Such an interaction might be a better predictor of the degree and speed of progress that individual authorities were able to achieve.

The emphasis of Ainscow and colleagues on collaborative teamwork and the development of consensus tends to underestimate the dilemmas and conflicts reported elsewhere and, as yet, there is little clear evidence of how far this has led to real progress for the authorities involved (particularly on the 'presence' dimension). However, their model does attempt to take account of the changing 'balance of power' between local authorities, schools and central government, which present increasing challenges for 'inclusive leaders' at local authority level.

Interestingly, there has been little focus within existing research, on the *maintenance* of inclusive practice/developments: whether cultures take on a life of their own, or require ongoing active support to prevent regression.

The literature on SEN support services leaves a number of questions, both in terms of their effectiveness in promoting inclusion and the role they can/should play in achieving this.

Finally, the increasing diversity of definitions of 'inclusion' presents a number of issues for research in this area. In this context, it is important to set out more explicitly some of

the key 'dimensions' for the use of the term, so that readers can be clear about its usage. In the current research, the main areas of interest relate to <u>presence</u> (of children with the broad continuum of SEN in mainstream schools), <u>participation</u> (the more qualitative aspects of their mainstream experience) and <u>ownership</u> (the degree to which mainstream schools/staff take responsibility for meeting children's needs and removing access barriers at both individual and institutional levels).

2.5 The research questions

The focus of the current research links to a number of issues presented in this literature review, specifically:

1) Do local authorities have an influence on the development of inclusion in education (particularly as measured by the percentage of children placed in the special school sector) ? If so, how far is this an <u>active</u> influence, rather than a simple product of individual authorities' demography and history ?

2) How is this influence exerted ? What are the forces that facilitate and support change ? what 'levers' that authorities are able to use ? How far do these match those identified in the existing literature (eg Ainscow et al (op.cit)) ?

3) What evidence is there for either of the existing models of local authority influence (specifically, the more 'top-down' and relatively 'pessimistic' model suggested by Croll & Moses (op.cit); and the more 'bottom-up' (and relatively optimistic) model suggested by Ainscow and colleagues ? How far does 'context' define what is possible and achievable ?

4) How is local authority 'inclusivity' maintained ? Does this require ongoing active steps to prevent regression or does inclusion carry on 'under its own steam' ?

5) What is the role of SEN support services in helping to develop and maintain inclusion and inclusive practice ?

In the light of the limited evidence in the literature on local authority and support service effects, it was decided that these questions would be addressed in a relatively open-ended way, without defining specific research hypotheses. In this respect, the research sought to adopt the kind of balance between 'tight' and 'loose' conceptualisations and methodological structures advocated by Miles & Huberman (1994) and others.

CHAPTER 3:   METHODOLOGY:

3.1   Overview

This chapter begins by setting out the theoretical orientation underlying the research design and the approaches used for data analysis. In the sections that follow, a detailed account is provided of each of the three research strands. The final two sections focus on the issues of reliability and validity and the ethical considerations that the research has needed to address.

3.2   Theoretical orientation

Miles & Huberman (1994) argue for an early indication, within researchers' accounts, of their theoretical orientations:

> *'It is good medicine, we think, for researchers to make their preferences clear. To know how a researcher construes the shape of the social world and aims to give us a credible account of it, is to know our conversational partner'* (p4)

Standard methodological textbooks (eg Cohen et al 2000) tend to classify orientations according to a number of dichotomies, which they see as related. Thus, an 'objectivist' position tends to be associated with an ontological view that there is a reality that exists independently, with an epistemological view that it is desirable and possible to identify and understand this reality, and a methodological approach that is based on (traditional) scientific method. A 'subjectivist' position, on the other hand, tends to be linked with an ontological view that there is no independent reality (that the world only exists through our construction of it), with an epistemological view that emphasises an understanding of individual and social meanings, and a methodological approach that accepts the 'reality' of researcher and respondent subjectivity. There is also a tendency to associate the use of quantitative and qualitative research strategies with these two positions.

Other commentators argue that there is more of a 'middle ground'. For example, some distinguish between our understanding of the natural and social worlds. Greenwood (1994 cit Crotty 1998), for example, accepts the idea of an independent reality for the physical world, but sees social phenomena as socially constructed rather than having an existence 'in themselves'. Giddens (1976) sees the study of the physical world as uncluttered by the need to engage with social constructions and individual meanings.

While there may be such as thing as 'social reality', in practice this is difficult to disentangle from day-to-day social interpretations and individual perceptions.

Crotty (1998) argues against the 'integrity' of the two dichotomous positions. Although there may be 'typical strings' that link theoretical perspectives, methodology and methods, they do not imply a mandatory connection. For example, the ontological belief in an independent reality does not necessarily entail an epistemological view that this reality can be objectively 'known' (objects may still only have a meaning through their connection with human consciousness). Similarly, an 'objectivist' view does not require the exclusive use of quantitative methods.

My own ontological position is essentially a realist one: in so far as I believe in the independent reality of both the physical and social world. In this respect, I am attracted to the perspective of Miles & Huberman (1994) who argue:

> '...we think that social phenomena exist not only in the mind but also in the objective world – and that some lawful and reasonably stable relationships are to be found among them. The lawfulness comes from the regularities and sequences that link together phenomena. From these patterns, we can derive constructs that underlie individual and social life.'

> 'Human relationships and societies have peculiarities that make a realist approach to understanding them more complex – but not impossible.'   (p4)

In their view, the study of relationships between social phenomena includes the possibility of <u>causal</u> explanations, which are important to me in exploring local authority effects and impact on the development of inclusion.

However, I am also attracted to the work of Layder (1990, 1994, 1998) who argues that the social world cannot simply be understood at one level. In his view:

> '....it is constituted by multiple ontological domains, each possessing its own distinct properties and characteristics, which cannot be reduced to each other, or some allegedly more encompassing principle.....'   (1998, p177)

The notion of 'domains' allows for simultaneous consideration of broader social systemic aspects of society and the 'everyday lifeworld' of social agents (individuals and groups), as well as the interaction between them.

At an epistemological level, this argues for the use of a range of different ways of 'knowing' or trying to understand reality, which may inform and be complementary to each other. In this way, research is construed as seeking to develop the nearest possible approximation to the 'truth', drawing on the range of theoretical resources and data available.

This leads to a methodological view that tends to be pragmatic in orientation, and permissive of a range of approaches, provided that these are helpful in addressing the research question(s). Crotty (1998) offers some justification for this position:

> *'Not many of us embark on a piece of social research with epistemology as our starting point. 'I am a constructionist. Therefore I will investigate…….' Hardly. We typically start with a real-life issue that needs to be addressed, a problem that needs to be solved, a question that needs to be answered. We plan our research in terms of that issue or problem or question'* (p13)

The key issue, Crotty argues, is not to engage in broad and acrimonious epistemological battles that merely serve to increase public scepticism of the value of the social research enterprise (Hargreaves 1996, Pring 2000), but to provide a clear rationale for the methodological choices we make and offer clear justifications for our interpretations.

> *'In the end, we want outcomes that merit respect. We want the observers of our research to recognise it as sound research. Our conclusions need to stand up' (p13)*

In this context, both quantitative and qualitative methods have a value. Some questions lead themselves to numerical answers; for others, numbers are less informative and potentially misleading. Qualitative approaches can provide a richer picture and help access a clearer understanding of social meaning. However, large samples usually require some translation of responses into numerical form. Even in a 'post-positivist' research world, it is important not to dismiss quantitative approaches out of hand. As Crotty points out:

> *'The ability to measure and count is a precious human achievement and it behoves us not to be dismissive of it'* (p14)

Similarly, engaging in qualitative approaches should not necessarily entail any loss in 'rigour'. This places a particular importance on careful planning and communication within the research process, addressing issues of reliability and validity, and being

aware of ethical considerations. It also requires an ability to step back from potential bias and challenge preconceptions. In this respect, as Bottoms (2000) has argued:

> *'Whatever the defects of 'positivism' (and it has many), it has bequeathed… a fine tradition of careful observation of the natural and social worlds, and a tradition also of the scientist's duty to report his/her research data dispassionately, even if he/she finds this personally unwelcome. For those of us who argue that there is an external world which is in principle capable of being described (albeit not without difficulties), these are important legacies'*   (p29)

In adopting a pragmatic orientation, I am not denying that there is a 'values' element in the choice of methods and research approaches. In this respect, I would disagree with the simple formulation of Homans (1949 in Miles & Huberman 1994 p2), who claims that '*people who write about methodology often forget that it is a matter of strategy, not of morals*'. There is a strong and valuable tradition within the field of naturalistic and ethnographic research that emphasises the importance of listening to the reality of those who are being 'researched' and empowering their 'voice'. A valid criticism of more traditional 'researcher-led' approaches has been their failure to recognise power issues and the domination of the researcher's own (theoretical and cultural) perspectives. This is an issue that requires particular attention when researching issues such as SEN and disability (Shakespeare & Watson 1998; Corker 1999).

Moreover, in undertaking research in the area of social policy, it is important to attend to the '*transmission and redesign of policy on the ground*' (Ozga 2000) by ensuring that the focus engages with policy and policy implementation at different levels (ie with practitioners and stakeholders, not just policy-makers themselves).

In outlining my theoretical orientation within this chapter, it is also important to indicate my view of the relationship between research and theory (which has a significant impact on the way in which data is analysed and interpreted). In this respect, I am drawn to the position of those such as Bottoms and Layder (ops cit), who see data and theory as inextricably linked. In their view, any analysis of data cannot be 'theory-free' (as is argued by grounded theorists such as Glaser & Strauss 1967: see later in this chapter). Nor can theory be constructed in the absence of empirical data.

Bottoms argues for a continuous approach to analysis and theory-building that is eclectic (across disciplinary domains) and avoids 'conceptual hegemonies' (eg the

dominance of particular disciplines over others). This has the obvious benefit of drawing from a broad range of resources to help understand a complex social world, as well as engaging with empirical investigation at a number of different levels. However, it presents significant challenges in terms of the range of data sources, breadth of reading and 'academic knowledge' required.

3.3   Research design and strategy

In line with the above orientation, a pragmatic strategy was adopted, which endeavoured to address the research questions outlined in chapter 2 (above) in a way that matched the scale of activity that is manageable within the context of an academic doctorate. The strategy incorporated a number of features:

(a)   multi-method approach;

A range of methods were used, for three main reasons:

(i) to help answer the different research questions

(ii) to address (and help connect) the multiple 'domains' of social reality (structure and meaning) outlined by Layder (and others), and

(iii) to enhance the validity of the overall research findings (through the use of triangulation (Campbell & Fiske 1959)

The advantages and disadvantages of multi-method approaches are set out by Denscombe (1998). He concludes:

> '....for those engaged in practical research, particularly the small-scale project researcher, none of the possible methods for data collection can be regarded as perfect and none can be regarded as rubbish. None has the sole key to 'truth' and none can be dismissed as hopelessly irrelevant for enhancing knowledge. A far more profitable way to approach things, and one which is far more in tune with the mood of social research as we enter the twenty-first century, is to recognise that each method provides its own distinctive perspective. Each method approaches the collection of data with a certain set of assumptions and produces a kind of data which needs to be recognised as having certain inherent strengths and weaknesses - in relation to the aims of the particular research and the practical constraints (time, resources, access) faced by the researcher'.
>
> 'Different methods can be used to collect data on the same thing. Each can look at the thing from a different angle – from its own distinct perspective – and these perspectives can be used by the researcher as a means of comparison and contrast.'   (p84)

(b)   the use of a range of 'cases':

Single-case studies can enable a 'deep' understanding of processes and how meanings are constructed and interpreted across a wide range of individuals. However, findings can be difficult to generalise. Local authorities in England vary widely, not just in size and demography, but also in political complexion, culture and organisation. While it is difficult to investigate a significant number of 'cases' within research of this scale, there were felt to be clear advantages in including more than one example (or type) of local authority in the investigation. In the researcher's view, this might enhance the generalisability of findings but also help challenge the universality of conclusions through an increased understanding of contextual differences.

In identifying cases for study, there were a range of sampling decisions: for example, whether to study only those authorities that could be identified as 'inclusive' (or moving significantly in that direction), or to look at a broader 'spread' across different authority 'types' (big/small; urban/rural etc).

(c)   the opportunity for more 'in-depth' investigation:

As Denscombe (1998) points out, one of the disadvantages of multi-method (and multiple case) approaches is that they may gain 'breadth' at the expense of 'depth'. The overall strategy in this research therefore identified one local authority where a more 'in-depth' case study approach was used. Depth was secured through the inclusion of a broader set of perspectives (parents, politicians, as well as officers and professionals), a greater focus on culture and history (as opposed to contemporaneous events), and more detailed examination of individual accounts.

(d)   recognition of the need for 'research economy':

To achieve the breadth and depth outlined above, there was a need to be pragmatic about research possibilities. This led to a decision to use a mixture of primary and secondary data. The author's recent national DfEE/NASEN survey of SEN support services in England (2001) provided some useful secondary sources. Questionnaires had been returned from a relatively high proportion (63%) of the 150 local authorities in England. Responses included a quantitative indication (through ratings) of the priority that senior officers, services, schools and parents gave to the achievement of inclusive outcomes. It was felt that these could be usefully compared to the data on local

authority inclusion levels and trends already available from the CSIE survey (CSIE 2002), which covered a similar time period (1997-2001)[22].

The survey had also involved three local authority case studies, in which a number of interviews had been carried out with officers, head teachers and support service personnel. While the focus of these studies was mainly on the impact of support services on inclusion and the potential effects of delegation of support service funding, the interview data also provided a range of broader perspectives on the local authority contribution to promoting inclusion, which it was felt could be used as secondary data to help address the current research questions. Field notes had been kept which were amenable to analysis according to the specific areas of interest.

Making use of both of these data sources (that were already available) made room for the research to include an additional in-depth case study, where specific issues could be further explored. This case study also involved interviews being carried out at a later stage in the research enterprise, which allowed some evaluation of changes in national and local context over time.

In summary, the research design included three elements, as shown in Table 4 below. In the following sections, details are given, for each element, about the procedure adopted for carrying out the research and analysing the data. Details also include an overview of the methodology used within the original DfEE/NASEN study.

3.4   Quantitative analysis

A copy of the full questionnaire used in the DfEE/NASEN survey is attached as Appendix 1 to this thesis. The questionnaire was directed towards senior officers in each local authority who had overall responsibility for managing SEN and support services. In practice, this was either the Assistant Director (Pupil Support) or an overall manager for SEN support service teams[23]. Officers were encouraged to involve relevant service team managers in the completion of the questionnaire.

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[22] The alternative means of gathering data on attitudes to inclusion in different local authorities would have been to construct a new and more specific questionnaire/survey. However, apart from the time demands involved in this activity, there was a risk of a much lower response rate (if the data was being sought for the reasons of private academic study as opposed to a Government-sponsored initiative).
[23] In some cases, this was the Principal Educational Psychologist; in others, a broader manager with support service management responsibilities

Table 4:   Summary of research methods:

Method	Focus	Data	Sample size	Sample type
Quantitative	Relationship between priority given to achieving inclusive outcomes and LA inclusivity (as measured by CSIE data)	Secondary (DfEE/NASEN questionnaire)	93/150 English LAs	Mixed
Qualitative	Factors leading to development of inclusion (influences/barriers); contribution of SEN support services; impact of loss/absence of central capacity	Secondary (DfEE/NASEN case studies)	3 LAs: unitary; county; London borough	Mixed/ purposive
Qualitative	Development and maintenance of 'inclusive culture'; influences and barriers; management of change over time; relative roles/contributions of different 'actors' (not just SEN support services)	Primary (case study interviews and documentary analysis)	Single case	High 'includer'

One section of the questionnaire focused on the criteria used by a range of stakeholders (schools, parents, support service personnel, and senior officers themselves) to judge support service effectiveness. Officers were asked to estimate the importance that each stakeholder group would give to five different criteria specified in the questionnaire item (C4: see Appendix 1), using a 5 point rating scale. The criteria were as follows:

(i)   improving pupil outcomes (progress)

(ii)   improving individual teacher outcomes (skills/attitudes)

(iii)   developing whole school practice

(iv)   achieving greater inclusion

(v)   reducing/managing demand for additional resources/provision

Questionnaires were returned from 93 out of 150 English LEAs[24]. A dataset was derived from 72 of these (returns were excluded where Authorities had provided multiple or composite responses, or in a small number of cases where it was evident that, despite clear instructions, respondents had ranked rather than rated the items). Within this dataset, comparisons were then made between the mean ratings given by officers for each of the stakeholder groups against each of these criteria. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 5 (below).

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[24] The distribution of responses was evenly spread across different types of LEA (county/metropolitan/ unitary/London Borough; urban/rural; big/small) and different regions of the country.

Table 5: **Estimated ratings given by different stakeholder groups to different criteria for judging support service effectiveness**

Average ratings given for each group by questionnaire respondents (N = 72)
(1 = lowest, 5 = highest)

	Schools	Parents	Support service staff	Managers
Pupil progress	4.31	4.76	4.36	4.53
Teacher skills	3.36	2.65	4.14	4.11
School development	2.79	1.89	3.82	4.25
Inclusion	2.42	3.38	3.79	4.32
Management of resource demand	2.07	1.72	3.47	4.00

The analysis showed that, while officers estimated that all four groups of stakeholders would value support services' contribution to improving pupil outcomes, the groups might vary significantly in the importance they ascribed to other criteria. In particular, schools and parents might place a much lower value on support services' contribution to 'school development', 'promoting inclusion' and 'management of demand' than support services and officers would themselves.

In the original report, there was no attempt to analyse these differences statistically. A preliminary step in the current analysis was therefore to undertake some simple statistical comparisons, using the SPSS statistical package (version 15.0: 2002). Use was also made of the R statistical software (Ihaka & Gentleman 1996: version 2.8.0: 2008). This has the ability to portray cross-tabulation relationships graphically, through the application of 'mosaic plots' (Hartigan & Kleiner 1981; Friendly 1994).

The analysis then moved on to a focus on managers' estimates of the weight given by the different stakeholder groups to support services role in 'promoting inclusion'. It was hypothesised that higher overall ratings might be associated with higher levels of 'inclusivity' at local authority level (as judged by CSIE segregation levels and trends). Analyses of the relationship between 'inclusivity' and the estimated ratings of specific stakeholder groups might then help establish the degree of 'power' (positive or negative) that these groups' priorities might have on local authority inclusion outcomes. For example, a high priority given to inclusion by support services themselves might not translate into a significant impact on 'inclusivity', in the face of other barriers and negative conditions. On the other hand, estimates of schools' commitment to this role might link more strongly to local authority inclusivity, as it might have a more powerful positive or negative effect.

The measures of 'inclusivity' were based on the CSIE data for the period 1997-2001, which provides percentages of the overall resident pupil population (5-15) in each local authority who are placed in any form of special school provision[25]. Two different measures were used, as follows:

(i)   current level of segregation (percentage of pupils in special schools in 2001)

(ii)   segregation trends (changes to percentage over the 3 years from 1999-2001)[26]

Trends were analysed in two ways: firstly, in terms of absolute change (difference in percentage levels between 1999 and 2001); and secondly, in terms of proportional change (the percentage change from the 1999 baseline). The latter measure allowed for the possibility that 'high including' local authorities would find it more difficult to achieve a large absolute reduction, compared to those with very high levels at the 1999 baseline.

The strength of relationships between estimates of stakeholder ratings and local authority inclusivity were tested using Pearson's correlation coefficient, on the basis that both variables could be described as using an interval scale.

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[25] The CSIE data for this period does not include numbers in mainstream special units/resource bases or in off-site provision for behaviour difficulties (Pupil Referral Units or alternative provision at 14+).

[26] The change period was restricted to these 3 years, partly to reflect the more recent picture, and partly to avoid confusion arising from local government reorganisation issues (a number of new unitary authorities were formed out of some of the old shire counties during the 1997-8 period).

3.5   DfEE/NASEN local authority case studies

The identification of the three local authority cases within the original DfEE/NASEN survey was linked to the rationale for that research, specifically:

(i)   the DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) wanted to promote greater inclusion (Excellence for All Children 1997) and was keen to identify good practice that contributed to this

(ii)   there was anecdotal evidence that the Government's policy of decentralising funding to schools (and reducing what Local Authorities could hold centrally) was leading to reductions in support service capacity

(iii)   if Local Authority support services were having a positive influence on the development of inclusion, this might mean a reduction in their capacity to do so

(iv)   this potential 'policy tension' would be less significant if schools were assuming greater responsibility for inclusion (and building their own 'capacity') as a result of the transfer of funds.

The three local authorities chosen reflected different conditions with regard to the key variables under consideration (inclusion, support service capacity and levels of delegation). They also reflected to some extent the diversity of types of Local Authority (shire county, new unitary, London Borough). A broad description of each LA is given below:

Area A: A shire county, largely rural with a number of small urban centres. The percentage of pupils in special school provision was comparable to the national average, but there was a clear desire at senior officer level to promote greater inclusion. SEN support services were well-established, with no immediate pressure to delegate funding to schools.

Area B: A London Borough, with significant ethnic diversity and areas of social disadvantage. The percentage of pupils in special school provision was above the national average, but there was a clear desire at senior officer level to promote greater inclusion. There was limited support service capacity due partly to broader budget pressures on schools and a political commitment to decentralise.

Area C:　　　A new unitary Authority, which had inherited a tradition of inclusion. The percentage of pupils in special school provision was below the national average, with a desire to maintain/extend this position. There was a well-established support services, with a significant proportion of funds now delegated to schools but a high level of 'buyback' sustaining existing levels of capacity.

The case studies involved three-day visits to each Authority during summer 2000 and included interviews with a range of officers, support service providers and school representatives, and reference to relevant documentation. A full list of interviewees for each Authority is given in Appendix 2. Interviews were semi-structured, focusing on the following themes:

(1) Interviewee role and responsibilities
(2) Inclusion: perceived influences, progress and barriers
(3) Contribution of support services
(4) Criteria (and process) for judging support service effectiveness
(5) Effects of delegation of support service funding to schools (anticipated/ experienced)

Field note records of responses were kept and used to help interpret the questionnaire returns. However, they were not formally analysed at the time.

The initial task for this research was therefore to prepare the field notes (as secondary data) for formal analysis. The notes were transcribed and typed up for coding. The coding approach used with this set of data was similar to that outlined by Miles & Huberman op.cit ch.4). Initial codes were derived from a combination of elements implied by the interview structure and from the specific focus of this research thesis. Preliminary application of these codes to the field notes led to the establishment of more formal codes, which are listed in Table 6 (below).

Those sections of the field note texts that were not directly relevant to the focus of the current research (e.g. details on support service role and organisation, service evaluation approaches, and statementing/resource management issues) were omitted from the coding process.

Table 6: Formal coding structure for LA case study interview field notes

Category	Code	Code description/exemplars
Definition of inclusion	Locational	Preventing special school placement Reintegrating from special school Reducing out of Authority placements Local mainstream vs mainstream unit Inclusion within school (vs withdrawal)
	Functional	'Meaningful inclusion' 'Best fit'/practical inclusion
	Mainstream ownership	Reduced dependence on external support 'Can do' mentality
	Catering for diversity	Personalised/individualised approach
	'Inclusive system'	Special schools/pupils included in 'mainstream' activity More flexible use of special school provision
	Access to education	Pupils out of school receiving educational entitlement Schools admitting permanently excluded pupils
	Other	Lower levels of statements Equitable access to resources/support
Nature of change	Pace: Gradualist	Slow pace 'Progressive'/cumulative Constrained 'workable compromise'
	Pace: Accelerated	'Push' 'Force'
	Source: school-led	School development planning
	Source: LA-led	LA direction/expectations
	Style: overt/explicit	Written policy
	Style: covert/implicit	Directions/policy 'inferred' Culture/ethos of inclusion
	Style: collaborative	School affiliation culture Importance of communication, persuasion, credibility
	Style: directive	Policy/expectations Monitoring/review
	Style: planned	Clear strategy
	Style: haphazard	No clear strategy
	Style: opportunistic	Developments where opportunities arise
Enabling factors	Demography	Rurality
	Inherited provision	Limited number of special schools
	Inherited culture/ethos	Mainstream/officer/service expectations
	Political commitment	'members on board' (supporting inclusion) power to influence
	Senior officer beliefs	Strategic intent Willingness to challenge
	LA policy	Declared intent Clarity

Category	Code	Code description/exemplars
Enabling factors (cont)	Support service (SS) capacity	Capacity to influence/intervene/prevent
	Support service (SS) beliefs	Beliefs/commitment to inclusion Rights/moral perspective
	SS engagement/ownership	Involvement in strategy development
	SS activities	Advisory/consultative/training vs direct Direct work = credibility to influence Persuasion, empowering, enskilling Shift to working with more complex needs
	SS (specific teams)	eg preschool, SEN casework section
	SS cohesion	Better links across services/teams More consistency 'broader alliances' joint agenda
	School commitment	'some schools on board' involvement/ownership existing examples of good practice priority in school development planning existing skills/resources
	Parental wishes	Choice for mainstream/local mainstream 'Sometimes against professional preference'
	Communication	Consultation Discussions
	Theory to practice	Beyond the rhetoric Support services 'making it work' Practical implementation of inclusion
	Decision-making	SEN decision-making process/criteria Negotiation
	Resources	Funding available Resource opportunities
	National influences	Project initiatives/finance National policy
Barriers	Lack of resources	Lack of funding Lack of (practical) support
	Low LA expectations	Lack of political/senior officer commitment Low relative priority
	Absence of LA policy	Lack of policy Lack of coherent strategy Policy not visible Policy too broad/unspecific
	Support services: beliefs	Mixed views between teams/individuals
	Support services: cohesion	No unified agenda No consistent model for mainstream support
	Support service skills	Lack of mainstream support skills in special schools Varying levels of practitioner effectiveness
	Support services: activities	Emphasis on direct work
	Schools: attitudes	Negative/variable attitudes Suspicion/fears (behaviour/funding)

Category	Code	Code description/exemplars
Barriers (cont.)	Schools: power	Power to resist Power balance between LA and schools
	School/LA relationships	History of difficulties/poor relationships Poor communication Agenda differences
	Schools: accountability	'Not our targets' Unwillingness to take on accountability from LA
	SEN decision-making practice	'custom and practice' Expectations
	Parental wishes	More specialised placements
	Pupil wishes	Not wanting to reintegrate
	National policy	Tensions with other requirements (standards) Other pressures on schools
Effects of delegation: Positive	Schools: increased ownership	Transfer of responsibility for some levels of need Increased self-sufficiency Some schools would use resources well Increases capacity/protects (if budget pressures)
	Schools: increased flexibility	Greater choice over use of funds to meet needs
	Schools: service quality	Improved accountability Greater professionalism More choice of individual practitioners
	Support services: flexibility	More freedom with fewer LA constraints
	Service/school relationships	More aligned agendas Reflects desired agenda (services to schools) Schools more constructive
Effects of delegation: Negative	Schools: misuse of resources	Loss of pupil entitlement/priority Over-use of Learning Support Assistants Quality assurance
	Schools: isolation	Schools left to manage on their own Loss of access to external support/advice
	Schools: no transfer of responsibility	LAs left to manage without the capacity to do so Does not increase ownership for some schools
	LA: loss of capacity to influence	More difficult to develop inclusion More difficult to challenge schools More difficult to withstand pressure for special/out of authority placements Increased demands on remaining central services
	SS: loss of economies of scale	Loss of specialist skills Fragmentation of knowledge pool Reduced flexibility to meet varying need Inequitable access to specialist expertise
	SS: meeting school agenda	Less easy to challenge More limited expectations (direct work) No 'team protection' against individual Head Teacher pressure

The frequency of occurrence of specific codes was recorded in terms of (a) the number of interviewees in each LA whose responses fell into this category and (b) the types of interviewee (role) who tended to respond in this way. This enabled comparisons to be made within and between the three case studies to help identify similarities, differences and emerging themes.

3.6   In-depth single local authority case study

The final element of the research undertaken was an in-depth single case study of an urban borough where significant developments in inclusion had occurred and been maintained over time.

3.6.1   Purpose of the study

The case study involved the gathering of primary data and was informed by the emerging findings of the previous two research strands. In particular, there was a desire to try and identify how 'inclusive cultures' were established at local authority level and how these were maintained and reinforced. The case study also provided an opportunity, through a broader set of interviews focused more explicitly on the research questions, to examine the range of influences (positive and negative) that affected the development of inclusion at local authority level and the interplay between them. Finally, the Authority chosen for study had experienced significant changes in the nature and organisation of its SEN support services. It had moved from a relatively limited capacity in the early 1980s through to massive expansion in the late 80s and 90s, to a more recent decision to delegate a substantial proportion of support service funding to schools in the early part of the new millennium. This provided an opportunity to 'track' the support service contribution over time and help test out emerging assumptions about the features of their contribution that might be most influential.

3.6.2   Sampling issues

One potential advantage of choosing this particular local authority was that, through previous consultancy contact, the researcher was well placed to obtain access to a range of people within the Authority (from senior politicians and officers through to schools, practitioners and parents). The researcher had also carried out part of his Masters degree research in the Authority at the time of the introduction of the 1981 Act (Gray 1981) and had some 'baseline knowledge' of its SEN decision-making practices before the inclusion policy was introduced.

The arguments against using this Authority as the case to study were:

(i)   An account had already been published of development in the Authority by two parents who were significantly involved in developments at both a personal and local political level.

(ii)   There were risks that the nature of the researcher's previous consultancy contact (which had contributed to the significant devolution of support service funding away from the 'centre' to mainstream schools) would skew interviewee responses[27].

(iii)   Because of the Authority's relatively unique profile, it would be difficult to assure anonymity in reporting the case study findings. It might also limit the capacity for generalisation.

In the researcher's view, the benefits of using this case outweighed the potential disadvantages. In relation to the existing narrative, there were benefits in achieving a more independent/less partial account of developments, that took account of a broader range of perspectives on change, as well as pursuing the particular areas of research interest. In managing the balance between consultancy and research roles, steps could be taken through the presentation of the research agenda, the way in which interviews were introduced, and the critical analysis of interview data, to help reduce potential skew and bias in interpretation. It was felt that, to some extent, all local authorities might be considered as 'unique', with one aim of the research being to identify a model for understanding developments in inclusion that was applicable across a wide diversity of contexts.

The issue of anonymity, however, has remained a continuing challenge throughout this research and is considered within the section on 'ethical considerations' later in this chapter.

3.6.3   Procedure

Initial contact was made with the Authority's Head of SEN and Support Services, who provided permission on the Authority's behalf for the research to be undertaken. Assurances were given that all information would be treated confidentially, with the

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[27] Interviewees might tend to over-emphasise or downplay the role of support services, depending on their view of the merits/otherwise of the devolution decision.

findings presented anonymously. A programme of interviews was subsequently arranged by the senior officer on the researcher's behalf, with the following people:

(1) Cabinet Member for Education

(2) Deputy Director (Schools)

(3) Head of SEN and Support Services

(4) Head of Learning Support Services

(5) Inclusion Development Officer (School Improvement Team)

(6) Head of Behaviour Support/Pupil Referral Unit

(7) Head of Hearing-Impaired Support Team

(8) Principal Educational Psychologist

(9) Group of 'old' parents, whose children had gone through the system[28]

(10) The Head Teacher and SENCO of a local mainstream primary school[29]

(11) Two parents of children with SEN/disabilities who attended the mainstream primary school visited

All respondents received a copy of an explanatory letter in advance of their interview, which set out the purposes and parameters of the research (see Appendix 3).

Interviews took place over the period from 2002 to 2005[30], at a range of venues (Council Offices; Support Service base; school; family home). Interviews were semi-structured, with a number of focus areas for discussion provided to interviewees in advance (see Appendix 4). These were:

(1) Role and contribution of interviewee(s)

(2) Successes and limitations to the Authority's achievements in relation to inclusion

(3) Key factors that had helped progress towards inclusion (at different phases of the development)

(4) Barriers to progress

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[28] These included the 2 parents identified above, an existing local councillor, and 3 others. They were a selected group of parents of children with Down's Syndrome who had all been 'strategically active' in the development of inclusion in the Borough during the 1980s and 1990s.

[29] Visit to the school was organised as an alternative to a group interview with Heads, which proved difficult to arrange. One other primary Head sent in a written response to the focus areas/questions provided

[30] Timescales needed to be carefully negotiated to avoid confusion with another 'external review', which the Director of Education had commissioned. This looked at a number of different aspects of the Authority's inclusion policy, some of which overlapped with the focus of this research.

(5) Approaches to maintenance of developments

(6) Contribution of SEN support services to developments (and effects of structural change/reorganisation)

(7) Relationship between achievement/standards and inclusion (compatibility issues)

Parents and professionals/officers/politicians received different versions of these questions, linked to their particular role/experience.

Careful use was made of the following techniques to help:

(i)   ensure the smooth flow of the interviews

(ii)   move beyond superficial responses to a deeper level of understanding, and

(iii)   avoid potential social desirability effects (respondent 'reactivity'/Hawthorne effects).

Establishing rapport: 'warm-up' and 'warm-down' at the beginning and end of the interviews through informal social interchange, along with a clear reminder of the purposes of the research, reassurances about confidentiality/anonymity and opportunities to seek further clarification if needed.

Prompts: to help avoid respondent reactivity, prompts were limited to the following circumstances:

(a) when responses 'drifted' and there was a need to refocus the respondent on the interview question

(b) to help 'reactivate' the interview when it seemed to be losing momentum (eg where there were prolonged silences), and

(c) to provide further clarification of the question where the interviewee appeared unsure of what was being asked.

Probes: these were used, judiciously, to get respondents to expand and elaborate on their initial answers, to reflect and, in some cases, to hypothesise about the generalisability of their experience across time and settings.

Checks: at different points in the interviews, usually before the next question was addressed, the interviewer would attempt to summarise the main themes contained within interviewee responses, and provide an opportunity for interviewees to confirm,

challenge or comment on these. A balance needed to be drawn here between the possible benefits of enhancing interview validity and the potential risk that summaries might prompt or 'define' socially desirable responses.

Interviews were taped, with the prior permission of interviewees and written field-notes were also kept, as a back-up. This proved particularly useful in one or two cases (Cabinet Member; old parents group) where speech was not always entirely clear. A written commentary on key points/impressions from the interview was also prepared as soon as possible after each interview. The researcher took responsibility for transcribing the tapes personally. This was partly because some of the recordings were not sufficiently clear for a lay person to easily access, and partly because of the length of some of the interviews (for example, the interview with the old parents group spanned over two hours – with interruptions).

The interviews inevitably involved retrospective accounts and perspectives of change over a significant period of time. The majority of the interviewees had been involved in this particular Local Authority for a substantial of time and had witnessed significant changes over this period, which they were able to comment on. Retrospective accounts present a number of reliability and validity issues (see later on in this chapter). In order to address some of these, the case study also drew on a number of contemporaneous documents (eg Committee reports and policy documents), which acted as a 'balance' and additional reference point in checking the 'stories' and perspectives of individual respondents.

3.6.4   Analysis

The approach taken to the analysis of the single case-study data differed from that used with the DfEE/NASEN local authority case studies, for the following reasons:

(i)   the relationship between the researcher and the DfEE/NASEN interview data was more 'distant'. Data were secondary and gathered some time before the start of the current research enterprise. The range of analytical frameworks that could be used was therefore more limited.

(ii)   the single case-study, as a primary source of evidence, offered greater opportunities for researcher-data interaction, both in terms of process (emerging theory influencing subsequent lines of questioning) and analysis approach.

(iii)   the data from the single case-study was more detailed and extensive (partly
           because of the length and focus of the interviews, and partly because they were
           transcribed in full. This allowed the researcher to 'connect'with different layers
           of meaning and levels of 'social reality'.

The approach used was based on 'adaptive theory' (Layder ops cit). Layder contrasts
this approach with more traditional 'data-driven' and 'theory-driven' analyses. On the
one hand, he challenges advocates of 'grounded theory' (eg Glaser & Strauss 1967)
who claim that their form of analysis is free from prior theoretical interference. He
argues that theory inevitably plays some part in the way that material/data is coded and
organised. On the other hand, he contrasts his approach with more traditional 'theory-
driven' analyses, which tend to reinforce and build on existing theoretical constructs
rather than being open to new ideas that the data can potentially generate.

Layder argues that effective data analysis needs to draw on a range of different
theoretical 'resources':

General theory: broad theoretical concepts (predominantly sociological, such as
                       'power', 'dissidence', 'leadership')
Substantive theory: theoretical concepts linked to the specific area of study
Emergent theory: theory 'emerging' through the analysis of the data itself

In his view, these resources can and should be used simultaneously, in order to make
best sense of the data, rather than leaving 'theorising' to a later stage (as in grounded
theory) or committing at an early stage to codes/categories that are derived a priori from
specific theories/questions.

As already mentioned, Layder also distinguishes between different theoretical
'domains' that are needed to understand social reality, which he sees as a 'multiplex
phenomenon'. He rejects the attempt by social theorists such as Giddens (1984) and
others to 'bind together agency and structure; the macro and the micro'. Instead, he
argues that social reality needs to be understood at a number of different levels, which
have 'varying and distinctive characteristics' that are 'mutually interdependent and
interlocking'. He identifies 4 theoretical domains: psychobiography and situated activity
(which are linked to more immediate and subjective 'lifeworld phenomena'); social

settings and contextual resources (which reflect historically-formed and pre-existing social conditions).

Layder identifies different types of concepts that link to these different domains of reality: behavioural (micro); systemic (macro); 'bridging' (micro/macro links); and 'theoretician' (established broader social concepts that social theorists tend to use/find helpful). He proposes that 'bridging' concepts are most productive as they increase our understanding of how individuals/groups interact with and interpret broader social forces, and are influenced by them. Theoretical 'products' at this level tend to take the form of 'typologies' and 'strategies/scripts' (here Layder makes a link to the work of Foucault, though his view of social reality is generally less subjective/less defined by interpersonal interaction).

Applying this kind of social theory to the focus of the present single case-study, the approach could be exemplified by the view that:

1) something happened: inclusion developed and, since then, change has been maintained in particular ways
2) people had an influence on its development and were affected by it
3) there were social forces/constraints that operated beyond the individual/group level
4) individuals/groups inevitably had to engage with this social context, and their behaviour/actions were influenced by it; they needed to adapt as the social context itself moved on
5) the changing social context has provided a different set of influences for new entrants to this 'social stage'.

In understanding this social phenomenon, relevant concepts at the behavioural/ psychobiographical level were needed to describe the personal reaction of individual parents to the news of their child's disability, their engagement with/experience of a range of professionals, the actions they took to promote their child's inclusion in mainstream schools and achieve positive outcomes for them, and any other steps they took to help realise their goals.

Those at the more systemic/social level focused more on issues such as the dominance of professional power, the impact/derivation of the national and local move towards

greater social inclusion, and the move away from collective social responsibility to the emphasis on the individual and greater consumerism

'Bridging' concepts, which cross both personal/interpersonal and more systemic domains, were needed to understand phenomena such as: how individuals/groups engaged with political and professional power, 'took control' and maintained their influence; and how the changing social context influenced 'first generation' and 'second generation' participants.

Layder does not give detailed examples of how his approach to analysis works in practice. However, a key aspect of the adaptive theory to the analysis of interview and other documentary material is the notion of the early use of 'orienting concepts' (Layder 1998), which can be drawn from any of the theoretical resources/domains listed above. In Layder's view, these are particularly important in areas of study that are relatively under-researched[31]. Orienting concepts allow both theory and emergent data to influence data analysis, rather than this being led more inflexibly by one or the other 'source'.

With these concepts in mind, he recommends a 'pre-coding' phase (relatively informal, using marks/annotations in the margins of the text), leading to the development of a more formal (but still flexible and 'adaptable') process of 'satellite coding', which is then used for more systematic analysis at a later stage.

Having gone through a process of pre-coding, based on this approach, a more formal set of satellite codes was established, which extended the coding structure already used for the analysis of the previous Local Authority case studies, and added in a number of additional categories/codes linked to 'bridging' concepts derived from the pre-coding phase[32]. A number of theoretical memos and annotations were also recorded, which were generated through the process of analysing and coding the text. These were used to support further theory-building.

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[31] Where there is a more substantial research literature, orienting concepts are more similar to those used in 'theory-driven' approaches, although they are more amenable to change, 'adaptation' or reformulation during the process of analysis

[32] The pre-coding used a number of different types of 'orienting concept': some deriving from 'general theory' (for example, organisational change; force-field analysis); others from substantive theory (e.g. concepts of inclusion; and others emerging more from the data (e.g. types of dissidence; 'political vs professional' change pathways)

To assist in the formal coding process, use was made of the QSR NVivo 8 computer software. This enables sections of text to be coded within a hierarchical structure of 'tree nodes', with the option of multiple links for any section to a number of different codes if this is required. Lists of examplars/'references' (and interview sources) for each node can then be accessed easily, and it is possible to obtain code usage frequency data, in terms of (a) number of sources where a particular code is used and (b) number of references linked to the code, for each source independently and in total. Frequency charts and reports allow comparison of different patterns of code use across different interview respondents/sources.

A full list of tree nodes is attached as Appendix 5. These are linked hierarchically and show the number of sources where each node was used (and the number of references made across all sources).

3.7   Addressing reliability and validity issues

Addressing reliability and validity issues in this research is important for two main reasons: firstly, as pointed out in the introductory chapter of this thesis, researchers (including this one !) carry a number of potential biases, the effects of which need to be minimised in order to reach valid conclusions in the area of study. Secondly, there is a need to demonstrate this validity to the wider research community (including those that are assessing it for examination purposes). As Crotty points out (1998):

> *'We need to be concerned about the process we have engaged in; we need to lay that process out for the scrutiny of the observer; we need to defend that process as a form of human enquiry that should be taken seriously.'*   (p13)

The notions of reliability and validity are well-rehearsed within the quantitative research tradition. Reliability is typically seen in statistical terms, through the calculation of probability levels and statistical significance. Validity is ensured through research design (the operationalisation of research questions and variables) and the validity of inferences (statistical; the relationships between correlation and cause).

The application of these concepts to the qualitative research field is less straightforward. For example, some authors (eg LeCompte & Preissle 1993 cit Cohen et al 2000) reject the use of these terms, regarding them as too firmly entrenched within the positivist

tradition. Different concepts are preferred, such as 'authenticity' (Silverman 1993; Guba & Lincoln 1994). Others see a tension within qualitative research between reliability and validity (particularly in interviews). Cohen et al (2000) quote Kitwood (1977) who argues that, where increased reliability is brought about in an interview by greater control of its elements, this is achieved at the cost of reduced validity:

> *'..the main purpose of using an interview in research is that it is believed that, in an interpersonal encounter, people are more likely to disclose aspects of themselves, their thoughts, their feelings and values, than they would in a less human situation. At least for some purposes, it is necessary to generate a kind of conversation in which the 'respondent' feels at ease. In other words, the distinctively human element in the interview is necessary to its 'validity' (p124)*

Kitwood suggests that a solution to the problem of validity and reliability might lie in the direction of a 'judicious compromise'.

3.7.1 Defining reliability and validity

Recent approaches to defining reliability and validity in qualitative research (see Cohen et al 2000 *passim*) tend to express them in terms of a range of 'quality standards' (which also cover broader ethical issues). Here, the two concepts tend to merge into one, or involve considerable levels of duplication. Rather than attempting to do justice to the range of conceptualisations, it is probably more useful to refer to the standards suggested by Miles & Huberman (1994 p277-280) which cover most relevant aspects. These include:

(i)   Objectivity/confirmability: e.g. degree of explicitness about potential biases, and demonstration of how these have been addressed through the collection and interpretation of data; level of clarity about procedures used; use of audit trails etc

(ii)   Reliability/dependability/auditability: various aspects of quality control

(iii)   Internal validity/credibility/authenticity: is the research internally coherent and does it 'make sense' ?

(iv)   External validity/transferability/fittingness: how generalisability issues are addressed; ease with which comparisons might be made to other cases/aspects of the phenomenon

(v)   Utilization/application/action orientation: degree to which the research passes the 'so what ?' test/catalyses thought or action

3.7.2 Ensuring reliability

Denzin & Lincoln (1994) argue that reliability in qualitative research can be addressed in several ways: through considering stability of observations, use of parallel forms and inter-rater reliability. The approach taken within the current research included the following elements:

(i)   the use of 'triangulation' (through a research strategy that incorporated a range of different methods)[33]

(ii)   inter-rater reliability tests, used to establish the strength of codes and categories in both the DfEE/NASEN and single case-studies. In each case, random samples of coding material and a range of different codes were given to colleagues to assess the degree of match between raters in their allocation of codes. Reliability levels of 86% and 90% were obtained respectively for the two datasets[34].

(iii)   a range of methods used to enhance the visibility of the 'audit trail' between raw data (interview transcripts and field-notes) and data summaries/interpretations, such as theoretical memos and annotations, marginal comments, and more detailed coding descriptions/exemplars.

(iv)   the use of documentary evidence and multiple perspectives to address reliability issues in retrospective accounts[35]

Miles & Huberman (op.cit) also point to the importance of the reliability of the researcher as the key 'research instrument' in qualitative research. In their view, markers of a good qualitative 'researcher-as-instrument' include:

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[33] The fact that different methods might lead to different and contrasting sets of findings does not in itself compromise reliability. This could merely reflect the possibility that realities are 'multi-layered' (Cohen et al 2000) or suggest the need for higher order 'more complex, context-respecting explanations' (Jick 1979 cit Miles & Huberman 1994)

[34] The first reliability check was carried out with a colleague, with preparatory explanation and training (21 excerpts, all codes). The second reliability check (using 20 excerpts and 30 codes from the single case-study) was undertaken by my research supervisor. On the first occasion (without preparation/training and with codes/code descriptors only), a 60% consistency level was obtained. This improved to 90% (with a different sample of material/codes) after explanation/training on codes where there were greater levels of mismatch. Inter-rater reliability checking proved more complex using the NVivo8 software, which allows multiple coding of individual sections of text.

[35] Cohen et al (2000) identify a number of risks in using such material. For example, remembered information may be faulty, selective and inaccurate. People may forget, suppress or fail to remember certain factors. Individuals may interpret their past behaviour in the light of subsequent events. Causes and factors that are multiple, diverse and complex may tend to be over-simplified. One advantage in the current research was that most of those interviewed had been 'protagonists' in the developments as opposed to 'commentators' basing their accounts on hearsay.

- *some familiarity with the phenomenon and the setting under study*
- *strong conceptual interests*
- *a multidisciplinary approach, as opposed to a narrow grounding or focus in a single discipline*
- *good 'investigative' skills, including doggedness, the ability to draw people out, and the ability to ward off premature closure*   (p38)

Miles & Huberman contrast their position with that adopted by some ethnographers and others who see lack of familiarity with the phenomenon or setting as an asset. In their view:

> '....although unfamiliarity…allows for a fertile 'decentering', it can also lead to relatively naïve, easily misled, easily distracted fieldwork, along with the collection of far too much data'   (p38)

Kvale (1996) identifies a similar range of qualifications for an 'effective interviewer', who should be:

- *knowledgeable:* (of the subject matter so that an informed conversation can be held)
- *structuring:*   (making clear the purpose, conduct, completion of the interview)
- *clear:*   (in choice of language, in presentation of subject matter)
- *gentle:*   (enabling subjects to say what they want to say in its entirety and in their own time and way)
- *sensitive:*   (employing empathic, active listening, taking account of non-verbal communication and how something is said)
- *open:* (sensitive to which aspects of the interview are significant for the interviewee)
- *steering:*   (keeping to the point)
- *critical:*   (questioning to check the reliability, consistency and validity of what is being said)
- *remembering:*(recalling earlier statements and relating to them during the interview)
- *interpreting:* (clarifying, confirming and disconfirming the interviewee's statements with the interviewee)   (p148-9)

Again, this suggests the need for a balance between the need for consistency and flexibility within the interview situation. Miles & Huberman's final characteristic (see above) also suggests a level of intrusiveness in interview probing, which may be necessary particularly when respondents are in a position of power (or involved in a formal political role – as was the case with some of the interviewees in the single case study).

3.7.3   Ensuring validity

Kvale (1996) argues that validity needs to be ensured across all phases of the research enterprise (from the development of research questions, design, procedure, analysis

through to interpretation and reporting). Judgements will need to be made by the external assessors of this research (my research supervisor and thesis examiners), as to whether there has been proper attention to validity at each of these phases. A key question will be whether sufficient detail has been provided to enable them to do so. How far does my account of the research demonstrate that I have kept the potential for bias in mind?

Cohen et al (2000) summarise a number of ways by which bias or 'invalidity' can be minimised. The key areas I have tried to) address (particularly in the single case-study where, in my view, the potential for bias has been greatest) have been:

(i)   avoiding the Hawthorne effect: for example, by being aware that, in their accounts of the delegation of support service funding, interviewees in the single case study might have responded differently because of my previous consultancy role

(ii)   reducing 'halo' effects: for example, by being conscious that previous working knowledge of interviewees and issues in the single case-study Authority might affect my interpretation of interviewee responses

(iii)   reliability measures: (see above section)

(iv)   selective use of data/invalid inferences: for example, by trying to ensure that differing/conflicting perspectives were recognised, and considering a range of alternative interpretations

(v)   focusing on the research questions: it has been important to keep coming back to these, with the risk of personal and professional interest leading me down a range of 'blind alleys' that are significant but irrelevant to the research focus

In a number of the lists of reliability and validity 'criteria' mentioned above, there is reference to the need to check back with interviewees in relation to both their responses and the way that these have been interpreted. This emphasis fits strongly with the increasing trend to see the research process as a 'democratic activity' (Simons 2009), with 'joint ownership' of findings and interpretations by researchers and participants. This area has been a continuing dilemma for the researcher, for a number of reasons, which are outlined in the following section.

3.8 Ethical considerations

3.8.1 Ethical issues

Miles & Huberman (1994) identify a number of ethical issues in social research, which range from the need for honesty and personal integrity (in the presentation of the research process and researcher accounts), through to the need for research to have 'worth'/social value (see also Griffiths 1998).

This section focuses on three key areas: (i) the notion of 'informed consent'; (ii) the need to respect the privacy of respondents/participants and ensure anonymity/confidentiality; (iii) ensuring that trust is not 'betrayed'.

The issue of gaining 'informed consent' needs to be seen much more broadly than obtaining the formal permission of 'gatekeepers' or the initial agreement of individual participants to be involved in the research. Consent needs to be 'informed' by a clear understanding of what participation implies, including awareness of the purposes of the research, the researcher's requirements, time commitments, the nature of the research process and the degree of feedback/use that will be made of the research material. Consent, if properly informed, also needs to include an understanding of potential risks, so that participants can judge whether they are still willing to be involved and decide how they want to present themselves. These issues should be addressed at the outset, but are also likely to involve ongoing negotiation as the process unfolds.

An understanding of the degree of confidentiality that can be assured by the researcher is likely to be a major factor involved in informed consent. Participants' (formal and informal) judgements on this issue inevitably affect their willingness to engage and give an honest account of their experience and perspectives).

Any mismatch between the assurances and information initially given and participant's experience of the research in action (particularly in relation to the use of data/findings and the anonymity/confidentiality issue) run the risk of leading to a sense of 'betrayal', with participants' feeling that the trust they have placed in the researcher has been abused.

3.8.2   Dilemmas and balances

A number of methodological guides present these issues in a relatively straightforward manner (eg Denscombe 1998). In practice, as Miles & Huberman point out, they entail a number of 'dilemmas' and 'balances', with the need to trade off the relative benefits and disadvantages of different attempts to resolve these.

One example of a trade-off is between the need to respect the privacy of the individual participant and the contribution that research needs to make to the 'general good'. An extreme instance of this dilemma would be the duty of researchers to expose practices that are unethical/illegal or likely to cause others significant harm (e.g where there are child protection concerns), even if this compromised assurances of confidentiality. A more typical example would be the need to achieve a balance between inviting a level of participant 'control' over the nature of research data and interpretations (through checking transcripts/inviting comments on drafts) and avoiding the risk that this might skew reality, 'paper over' important discrepancies and points of significance, or reinforce 'socially desirable' responses.

There is also a tendency for the 'democratic' research model (Simons 2009) to assume a particular 'power balance' between researcher and researched, which needs to be re-weighted in the participants' favour. A strong emphasis on informed consent and 'co-creation' of meanings is one strategy for moving researchers from their traditional 'autocratic' position into a mode of 'empowerment'. This has a significant value in researching oppressed groups and those whose 'voice' has too often been submerged or hidden. However, the balance may be different when 'researching the powerful' (Whyte 2000). Here participants may have an interest in limiting the researcher's access to broader 'realities' – and have the power to do so. In this context, the issue arises as to whether it is 'ethical' to provide the same level of opportunities for commenting on and validating data/conclusions, or whether other strategies are permissible to help ensure that the 'power balance' is tilted in the opposite direction.

In addressing a number of such dilemmas, most commentators (eg Cohen et al 2000) emphasise the need to judge the relative <u>benefits</u> of particular resolutions (usually increased validity of the research findings) against the <u>harm</u> that participants might experience as a consequence of these decisions. In the example described above, this might lead a researcher to make stronger efforts to enhance 'participant control' when

working with oppressed or vulnerable groups (on the basis that these might both improve validity *and* reduce the potential harm that research with such participants might (unintentionally) incur). The researcher might judge that 'powerful' groups or individuals typically had more resources to withstand potential 'harm', and that the quality of findings would be significantly enhanced if they were able to get behind the 'official story'.

It is important to recognise that values judgements are being made here. Usually 'powerful' people will want to control research access for a <u>purpose</u> (e.g. to maintain the status quo; to avoid potential threats), associated with their view that research carries a risk of personal (or institutional) 'harm'. Judging the significance of this potential harm will be affected by researchers' own ethical (and sometimes political) positions – for example, the strength of their commitment to the redistribution of wealth and power vs the need to avoid relative harm for individuals, whatever their particular circumstances.

The issue of anonymity/confidentiality also raises dilemmas of its own. There has been recent debate about the degree to which this is always a 'false promise' in the face of the 'determined sleuth' (Walford 2005; Kelly 2009). Again, there is a trade-off between the need to preserve anonymity and the need to provide the level of detail that is required (particularly in single case-studies) for a 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) to be made.

Seeking to address these kinds of issues in the area of social policy is not easy. As Finch (1985) has commented (cit Cohen et al 2000):

> *'There can be acute ethical and political dilemmas about how the material produced is used, both by the researcher her/himself, and by other people. Such questions are not absent in quantitative research, but greater distancing of the researcher from the research subjects may make them less personally agonising. Further, in ethnographic work or in-depth interviewing, the researcher is very much in a position of trust in being accorded privileged access to information which is usually private or invisible. Working out how to ensure that such trust is not betrayed is no simple matter…..'*   (p67)

Kelly (1989) argues that the trust issue is particularly acute in activities such as action research where researchers develop a longer-term relationship with 'participants'. Cohen et al (2000) paraphrase her position as follows:

> *'She says that, if we treat* (participants) *as collaborators in our day-to-day interactions, it may seem like a betrayal of trust if these interactions are recorded and used as evidence. This is particularly the case where the evidence is negative. One way out, Kelly suggests, could be to submit reports and evaluations of* (participants') *reactions to those involved for comment: to get them to assess their own changing attitudes. She warns, however, that this might work well with* (participants) *who have become converts, but is more problematic where* (participants) *remain indifferent or hostile to the aims of the research project.'*   (p63)

Although my single case-study could not be described as an example of action research in itself, similar dilemmas arose for me (in terms of the sharing of evidence) as a result of my previous (and potentially ongoing) contact with the Authority in a consultant role.

3.8.3   Presentation of research material

When feeding back to local authorities in my consultant role, my reports are typically in summary form (generally 15-20 pages). Key issues and themes emerging from a range of different interviews are condensed into a relatively broad overview. This is important in order to help reconcile a number of different perspectives and priorities. In writing such reports, I am generally trying to present a 'reality' with which all key players can identify and which helps people to 'move on'. Differing viewpoints and the internal politics of large organisations can lead to the generation of a number of unhelpful 'themes' that can be obstructive to compromise, collaboration and progress.

In this context, I am able to reassure interviewees that my feedback will be at the level of 'broader strategic issues' and will not refer to what individual respondents have said. My role as a consultant often involves a degree of mediation and it is important in this context to be seen as independent and non-judgemental.

Writing a research report for the purposes of PhD examination carries a different set of requirements. There is a much greater onus on the writer to demonstrate validity and reliability and therefore to provide a more detailed account. Inevitably a greater level of detail increases the risk of anonymity being compromised. There is also the possibility that this will reveal mutually critical positions that the participants may not previously have shared.

A particular issue relates to the inclusion of direct quotes from interviews. On the one hand, these are important as examples of 'concept-indicator links'. They can also show

evidence of 'authenticity'. On the other hand, they are likely to reveal more personal detail as they are associated with particular interview sources/interviewee roles.

In the original DfEE/NASEN study, there was limited direct use of interview material in the dissemination process. Although some contextual background was provided for the three local authority cases, they were difficult to identify as there were examples with similar characteristics elsewhere. Where 'quotes' were used, these were adapted from handwritten field-notes, which inevitably lost some elements of personal detail. There was no evidence of harm or compromise to the research participants, even though the dissemination was relatively public (through three regional conference events attended by officers from most local authorities as well as other interested stakeholders).

Clearly, in the current research, there is a greater risk that anonymity/confidentiality might be compromised, as a result of the formal analysis of interview field-notes and more detailed reporting of findings. However, in the researcher's judgement, the specific Local Authorities used in the case studies would still be difficult to identify.

The key issues have been associated with the single-case study, which has more unique characteristics and where the report includes more in-depth description. The final section of this chapter focuses specifically on this aspect and how the range of ethical issues has been addressed.

3.8.4   Addressing ethical issues in the single-case study

In this study, formal consent was obtained initially through the senior officer for SEN. There was clear communication about the purposes and requirements of the research, including an honest declaration that it would be written up for PhD examination. Summary feedback was offered on the broader research conclusions, to be provided when the thesis had been completed. The timelines for this were open-ended. My intention is still to provide this feedback both orally and in writing, although, as a number of years have passed since data collection, some interviewees have now retired or moved on.

A clear opportunity was provided to all participants in the first part of their interviews to ask questions about the process. Where interviewees asked for certain comments or bits of information to be treated as 'off the record', this wish was respected. However, the

decision was made <u>not</u> to offer transcripts back for checking, or to invite comments or additions, nor to seek specific permission for individual quotes to be used. The rationale for this decision was that it was felt that the validity of the findings might otherwise be reduced. In particular, it was clear in some of the interviews (particularly those with local politicians, and the parents who had become council members) that there were certain 'themes' that they wanted to register. These included a strong emphasis on the Borough's achievements, the degree of political support for change, and a tendency to try to minimise policy tensions. In practice, their interviews provided a fuller picture, with more evidence of political and practical dilemmas, which, it was felt, might be 'written out of the script, if greater opportunities were provided for participant editing and 'control'.

It might have been possible to adopt a selective approach to this issue, for example, through seeking comments and permission from some participants but not others. However, it would have been difficult to defend this inconsistency in practice, if challenged.

In the end, judgements were made on the basis of the 'degree of harm' that a less 'democratic' approach might cause to individual participants, should the Authority be identified by the reader. It was felt that harm was less likely to be significant for the following reasons:

(i)   levels of public access to an unpublished academic thesis are likely to be limited

(ii)   further restrictions can be placed on access by the University Library, if the external examiners consider this to be appropriate

(iii)   I would intend in any published account to reduce the risks of identification through limitation on detail, as well as seeking permission for any particular quotes used in this medium

(iv)   although a number of direct quotes have been used in the case-study account, the overall intention has been to ensure a 'fair and balanced' presentation of interviewee responses and the Local Authority's developments

(v)   as a test of any sense of potential 'betrayal', I do not consider that my working relationships with any of the interviewees would be adversely affected if the Authority's identity were discovered[36]

(vi)   as already indicated, a number of the case study interviewees have now retired or moved on. This reduces the likelihood of any 'revealed tensions' adversely affecting current working relationships and practices

Inevitably, this approach is not ideal and the resolution to the ethical dilemmas is not entirely satisfactory. And, although I have sought the advice of my supervisor and valued colleagues (who have generally supported this approach), the 'agonising' continues. Some reflections on how ethical 'risks' might be better addressed in future social policy research of this kind are provided later on in the Discussion chapter of this thesis.

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[36] Unless identification led to adverse media criticism, which seems unlikely in the context of levels of public access to the thesis (as indicated above)

CHAPTER 4:   FINDINGS (1):   QUANTITATIVE DATA:

4.1   Introduction

This chapter reports on the quantitative analysis of the relationship between two sets of data:

(1) senior Local Authority officer estimates of the value placed by different groups of stakeholders on the achievement of inclusive outcomes, when judging SEN support service effectiveness (DfEE/NASEN survey: Gray op.cit)

(2) levels of inclusion in different LAs (as measured by the percentage of pupils placed in special school provision: CSIE data: 1997-2001)

4.2   Analysis of DfEE/NASEN data

Before examining this relationship, a statistical analysis was carried out of the estimated value given by the different stakeholder groups to inclusion when judging support service effectiveness[37]. The mean estimated rating for each group is given in Table 7 (below):

Table 5:   Mean estimated ratings given by different stakeholder groups to inclusion as a criterion for judging support service effectiveness (1 = lowest, 5 = highest):   (N=72)

Schools	Parents	Support service staff	Managers themselves	Mean
2.42	3.38	3.79	4.32	3.48

As indicated previously, the senior officers/managers, on average, gave the highest rating of any group to the inclusion criterion. The average rating estimated for support service staff was slightly lower. Estimated ratings for parents were more mixed, with a number of questionnaire respondents indicating a diversity of parental view. Schools were considered likely to rate this criterion as of relatively low importance.

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[37] A summary of average ratings by senior officers for all criteria across all four stakeholder groups is provided in the previous chapter (3.4 Table 5)

In order to establish the relationships between these estimates for different groups, inter-correlations of ratings across all 72 local authorities were calculated (see Table 8 (below)).

Table 8:   Correlations between estimated ratings given by different stakeholder groups to inclusion as a criterion for judging support service effectiveness

		Managers	Support services	Schools	Parents
Managers	Pearson Correlation	1	.521(**)	.411(**)	.295(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.012
	N	72	72	72	72
Support services	Pearson Correlation	.521(**)	1	.330(**)	.392(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.005	.001
	N	72	72	72	72
Schools	Pearson Correlation	.411(**)	.330(**)	1	.383(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.005		.001
	N	72	72	72	72
Parents	Pearson Correlation	.295(*)	.392(**)	.383(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.001	.001	
	N	72	72	72	72

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

All correlations were positive and significant at the 0.05 level or below, suggesting that the pattern of ratings across the local authority questionnaire responses was relatively stable. The strongest correlation was between ratings for support service staff and for managers/senior officers themselves (0.52). The weakest was between ratings for managers and parents (0.30).

The strength of the link between manager/senior officer and support service staff ratings was further examined through cross-tabulation (see Table 9 below):

Table 9: Cross-tabulation of ratings given by managers to inclusion as a criterion for judging support service effectiveness, and ratings estimated for support services themselves (N=72: figures show number of respondents for each cell)

		Support service ratings (estimated)					
		1	2	3	4	5	*Total*
Manager ratings	1	0	0	0	0	0	*0*
	2	0	0	1	1	0	*2*
	3	0	1	7	0	0	*8*
	4	0	2	11	13	1	*27*
	5	0	1	4	15	15	*35*
Total		*0*	*4*	*23*	*29*	*16*	*72*

Figure 1 (below) shows a 'mosaic plot' of the interaction between the two sets of ratings (developed using the R statistical analysis software (see Hartigan & Kleiner 1981; Friendly 1994). The blue blocks indicate interactions that are significantly higher than expected and those in red where they are significantly lower, under a model of proportional equal scores. The number of managers who rated inclusion very highly (5) as a measure of support service effectiveness, who also saw this as valued very highly by support services themselves, was significantly more than expected. The number who rated it very highly (5) but saw this as less important (3 or below) for support services themselves was significantly lower than expected.

The interaction between manager ratings and those attributed to schools is shown in cross-tabular form in Table 10 (below). There was a tendency for higher manager ratings to be linked to a lower perceived school value of this criterion as a measure of support service effectiveness. However, the statistical significance of this relationship could not be properly assessed through Chi-square as a result of the high number of cells with low frequencies[38].

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[38] Low frequency cells remained a barrier when ratings were summed 'post hoc' to provide a 3x3 (high, medium, low) and 2x2 (high, low) matrix.

Figure 1: Mosaic plot of interactions between manager ratings of inclusion as a criterion for judging support service outcomes and ratings attributed to support services themselves (see Hartigan & Kleiner 1981; Friendly 1994)

managsupportinc.xtab
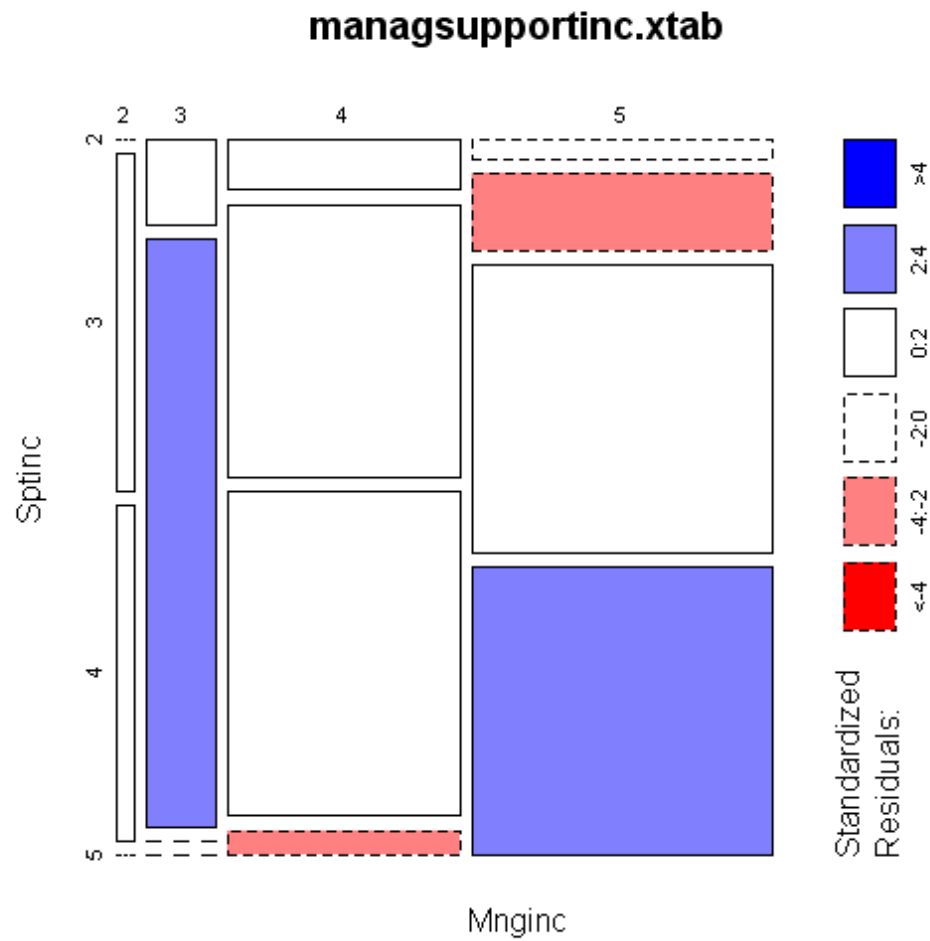
Table 10: Cross-tabulation of ratings by managers of the importance of inclusion as a measure of effectiveness for support services, and ratings attributed by managers to schools (N=72: figures show number of respondents for each cell)

		School ratings (attributed)					
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	*Total*
Manager ratings	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	2	0	0	0	0	2
	3	4	2	1	1	0	8
	4	6	13	7	1	0	27
	5	3	13	9	6	4	35
Total		15	28	17	8	4	72

4.3   Relationship between stakeholder ratings and segregation levels in the responding Authorities

The next set of analyses looked at the relationship between the estimated value placed by different groups of stakeholders on inclusion as a criterion for judging support service effectiveness and the actual levels of inclusion in the responding Authorities (as measured by the percentage of pupils on the roll of special schools). The 2001 special school percentage data were used as these matched the year that the questionnaires were completed.

Relationships were also examined between the ratings of different stakeholder groups and 'segregation trends' (ie whether percentages were increasing, reducing or staying the same). This was done in two ways: first, using the change in overall percentage of pupils in special schools between 1999 and 2001, and second, using the 'percentage (or proportional) change' figures (based on individual Local Authority 1999 starting points)[39].

(a) 2001 special school data:

The strongest relationship was found to be with estimated school ratings. A negative correlation (Pearson's: -0.268; p=.023) was found which was significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed test). Managers in local authorities with lower percentages of pupils in special schools were more likely to say that schools saw inclusion as an important measure of support service effectiveness. Those with higher percentages in special schools viewed schools as rating inclusion as of less important when it came to judging support services. Figure 2 (below) shows the relationship as a scattergram.

There was also a negative correlation between 2001 special school percentages and managers' own ratings (Pearson's: -0.162; p=.174). However, this was not statistically significant (p>.05; 2-tailed test). There was no evidence of a clear relationship between the percentage of pupils in special schools and perceived ratings by other groups (parents; support services themselves: r = .044 and .050 respectively).

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[39] Some would argue that, the lower the percentage of pupils there are in special schools, the more difficult it is to achieve further reductions, as pupils' needs tend to be more complex/significant. The use of a proportionate change measure recognises this issue.

Figure 2: Scattergram showing relationship at LA level between the percentage of pupils in special school (2001) and estimated school ratings of the importance of inclusion as a criterion for judging support service effectiveness
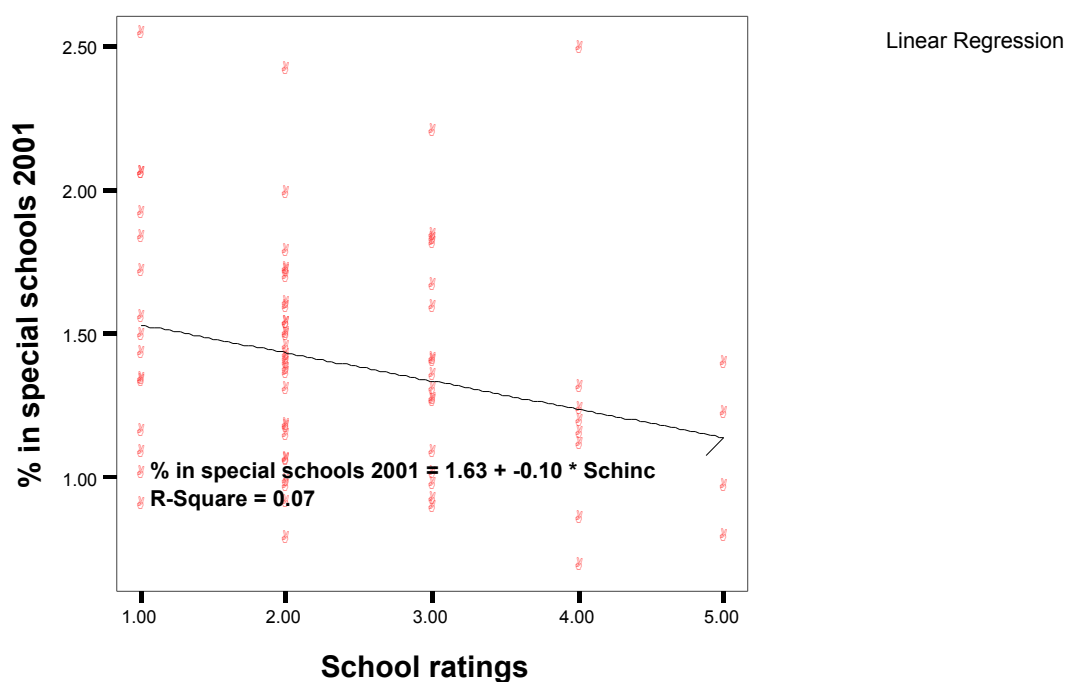
(b) change in percentage 1999-2001:

There was still a small negative correlation between estimated school ratings and segregation levels, when these were measured in terms of trends (Pearson's: -0.129; p=.280). However, this was not statistically significant (p>.05; 2-tailed test). However, using this measure, there was a significant negative correlation between segregation trends and managers' own ratings (Pearson's: -.234; p=.048; p<.05, 2-tailed test). Managers who saw inclusion as an important measure of support service effectiveness tended to be associated with Local Authorities that had reducing percentages of pupils in special schools (see Figure 3 below).

There was evidence of a small negative correlation with support service ratings (Pearson's: -0.105; p=.379), but this was not statistically significant. Again, there was no clear correlation with perceived parent ratings (Pearson's: -0.006; p=..962).

Figure 3: Scattergram showing relationship at LA level between changes in percentage of pupils in special school (1999-2001) and local authority managers' ratings of inclusion as a criterion for judging support service effectiveness
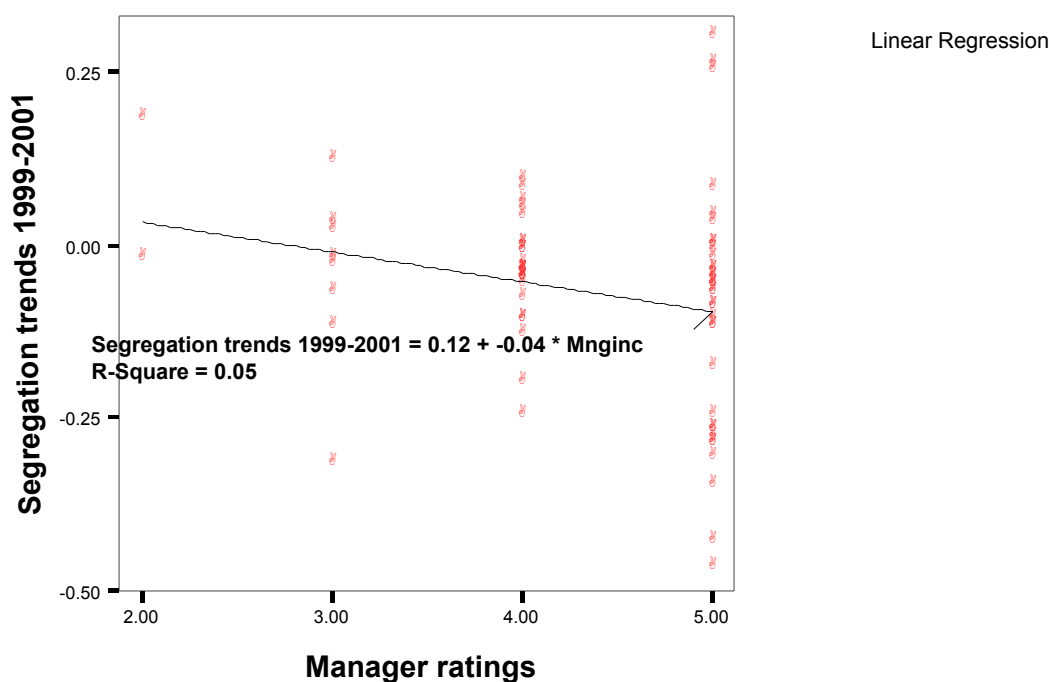
(c) proportionate change (1999-2001):

In practice, this indicator was found to be closely related to the overall change data referred to above (Pearson's correlation between the 2 variables = .964; p=.000). Relationships followed a similar pattern, with a negative correlation (not significant) between proportionate change and school/support service ratings and a significant negative correlation (r= -.232; p=.05) with ratings by managers themselves.

4.4   Overview of findings:

Some relatively important conclusions can be drawn from the examination of the relationship between managers' own ratings of the importance of inclusion as an indicator of support service effectiveness and the data on Local Authority use of special schools. Conclusions regarding the views of other stakeholder groups are more speculative as these were accessed indirectly (through manager attributions) rather than through asking the stakeholders themselves. However, manager perceptions are still interesting as this data provides some evidence of their expectations and views about potential barriers to the development of inclusion in their particular authority settings.

The average rating for managers was high, suggesting that, as a group, they place a significant value on the contribution of support services to pushing forward the inclusion agenda. The relatively lower rating attributed to support services themselves suggests that managers see them as being somewhat less committed to this outcome. They tend to see schools as placing much less value on inclusion when judging support service effectiveness. Comments within some questionnaire responses suggested that parents' ratings were difficult to generalise, as they were largely down to individual preferences and beliefs about the relative value of education in mainstream vs special school settings.

The variation in average ratings (if manager perceptions are accurate) is likely to mean that support services are having to deal with conflicting priorities between their managers ('clients') and their consumers (some parents and schools).

Examination of the relationship between stakeholder ratings and local authority inclusion/segregation (2001) data suggests the following:

1) In those local authorities with a lower percentage of pupils in special schools, managers tend to see schools as placing a higher value on inclusion as a criterion for judging support service effectiveness. In those where the percentage is higher, schools place less emphasis on this outcome.

There could be a number of explanations for this finding, for example:

(i)   when a higher proportion of children with significant special needs are placed in mainstream, schools need support services more to help them include children successfully; where there is a tradition of a greater number of pupils being placed in special school, schools tend to judge support services more on other criteria (eg pupil progress)

(ii)   where a Local Authority has a strong policy/expectation/culture of inclusion, with a commitment to mainstreaming, schools expect support services to be part of this agenda and therefore judge their effectiveness on this basis; where this expectation/ policy/culture is less strong, schools judge support services against other priorities

(iii)   where schools have a strong commitment to inclusion themselves, and expect support services to assist them in achieving this outcome, there are likely to be fewer pupils placed in special schools; where schools do not have this commitment and have different priorities for support services, more pupils are likely to be placed in the special school sector.

2) In those Local Authorities with a lower percentage of pupils in special schools, managers themselves tend to place a higher value on support services' role in inclusion (although this tendency was not statistically significant).

Again this finding could be interpreted in terms of:

(i)   managers' views being affected by their own Local Authority policy/context/culture (of low special school usage), or

(ii)   managers' views/priorities/values having a more causal effect on the extent of special school usage.

3) The importance placed on inclusion as a measure of effectiveness by support services themselves and by parents (at least as perceived by managers who completed the questionnaire) appears to be unrelated to the percentage of pupils in special schools.

This finding could be interpreted as

(i) support services and parents have little influence on the percentage of children placed in special schools in Local Authorities, or

(ii) the views of support services and parents are relatively independent of the degree of special school usage in individual LAs.

The use of segregation <u>trend</u> data provides some stronger support for the impact of stakeholder expectations on inclusion outcomes. When trend data were used, a negative correlation was found with manager's own ratings, which was statistically significant. Managers who rated inclusion highly as a measure of support service effectiveness tended to work in Local Authorities where the percentage of pupils in special school had declined over the previous three-year period.

However, even this finding does not provide causal evidence. It could be that other factors were contributing to the change in special school numbers, and that manager

ratings were affected by the need for support services to respond effectively to the presence of a greater proportion of pupils with SEN in the mainstream sector. Moreover, in the absence of more detailed information on staff continuity, it cannot be presumed that managers completing the questionnaires in 2001 had been working in their Local Authority at the start of the 'change period'.

While the negative correlations shown in Figures 2 and 3 (above) were statistically significant, the scattergrams show a number of 'outliers': cases that would merit further investigation. For example, some managers rated inclusion very highly (5) as a measure of support service effectiveness, and yet in their Local Authorities there had been little change/a positive increase in the percentage of pupils in special schools. There are a number of potential explanations: for example,

(i)   there may be a gap between manager 'values'/beliefs and their personal capacity to put these into practice

(ii)   in some Authorities, managers may experience greater barriers (political, contextual) to developing greater inclusion, even though this is in line with their personal beliefs

(iii)   although managers might rate inclusion as an important criterion for judging support service effectiveness, support services might not share this commitment themselves

A key finding from this quantitative analysis is that, although support services are on average regarded by managers as rating inclusion as an important measure of their success (mean rating = 3.79), there does not appear to be any clear link between this belief and the percentage of pupils in their Local Authorities who are placed in special schools. There are a number of possible explanations for this:

(i)   support services are not able to impact on inclusion alone, unless they have a shared commitment to this outcome from schools and parents (which the data suggests may not always be present)

(ii)   support services may espouse inclusive values but may lack the capacity to influence school practice/beliefs and parental preferences

(iii)   managers may have over-estimated the degree to which inclusion is a priority for support services to achieve

The likelihood of the range of alternative explanations for the interactions examined in this analysis is explored in the following sections, which involve detailed analysis of the three Local Authority case studies undertaken in the 2001 DfEE/NASEN research (Gray 2001) and the more substantial single case study, which explored a greater range of stakeholder views.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS (2): LOCAL AUTHORITY CASE STUDIES:

5.1   Introduction:

This chapter reports on findings from the formal analysis of secondary data gathered originally by the author from interviews in three different local authorities as part of the DfEE/NASEN survey of SEN support services in England. Summary descriptions of the demographic and policy context of each local authority are provided in Chapter 3 of this thesis (section 3.5).

Findings from each local authority case study are presented in turn, with separate accounts of the perspectives of senior officers/managers, support services and schools. At the end of each case study, a summary is provided of commonalities and differences in perspectives across these three groups. The final part of the chapter draws together some overall themes and pointers for further investigation, which contributed to the focus of the single case-study.

5.2   Area A:
5.2.1 View from the 'top':

5.2.1.1 Origins

In her account of the history of inclusion in her Authority, the senior manager for AEN (Additional Educational Needs)[40] set out a picture of accelerated change within a context which was already receptive to the development of more inclusive practice. She attributed the acceleration to the appointment of some key new officers. Relevant extracts from the field notes of this interview read as follows:

> *The move towards inclusion in Area A preceded the Government Green paper (Excellence for All) and developed more rapidly than anticipated. It was led by new officer appointments in 1996 – different officer belief systems – which radically changed the character of the AEN management group.*
>
> *Area A was 'ripe for change': there were already strong links with other agencies and the voluntary sector who supported the move. In 98/99, there were a group of parents and willing schools who were pushing for more inclusive practice – there was a willingness for development, but practical issues……*

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[40] Who was also Principal Educational Psychologist

5.2.1.2 Definition of inclusion and nature of change

The senior manager presented a collaborative and overt/explicit approach to the development of the Authority's inclusion strategy, with the emphasis being on the creation of more inclusive local area 'systems', which brought together both mainstream and special schools and the full range of local.authority support services.

An Inclusion Working Group was developed. This was very large and included voluntary organisations, parents and Council members. Papers were commissioned. This led to an Inclusion Policy, with a broader consultation day held in 2000. The findings are currently being analysed. The aim is to develop closer community links for all pupils: some special schools will be retained as area resources (providing outreach and mainstream links) – we are trying to break down the mainstream/special school barriers.

We're using more inclusive language (eg the Index for Inclusion). There is a developing concept of 'community learning partnerships' (clusters) – we're looking to fund/empower/enable these.

SEN support services have already been reorganised (96/97) *on an Area model and work as multi-professional teams.*

There has been a history/culture of school involvement and consultation: therefore inclusion hasn't been an unexpected development; there has been a cautious welcome, but issues about EBD, skills, training, resources………

5.2.1.3 Role of SEN support services

She saw local authority SEN support services as playing an important part in the development of the policy and practice of inclusion. She referred to their general commitment to achieving this outcome (acknowledging some differences in view about what mainstream schools should reasonably be expected to deliver, and the need to take account of the needs/circumstances of individual pupils). An important aspect of their contribution was the responsibility they felt for inclusive/non-inclusive outcomes.

In her view, it had been important to review the nature of support service activity to ensure that this promoted inclusion:

All SEN support services are working towards a 'consultation model' – 'permeating schools': need to change school practice; direct support doesn't enskill teachers/other children or help develop inclusion.

In considering the potential impact of delegation of support service funding to schools, she acknowledged the risks that there might be some loss of specialist skills and that schools might be unwilling to take on all the associated responsibilities (particularly for

those pupils who were seen as more 'socially unattractive'). However, she saw the option of delegation to 'community learning partnerships' as being a 'half-way house' between individual school and local authority level organisation. Successful engagement of community learning partnerships in the management of a broader resource would, in her view, be a major step in developing greater mainstream school ownership of SEN.

5.2.2   Support service manager/practitioner views:

5.2.2.1 Definitions of inclusion

The focus of support service responses on the topic of inclusion tended to be more clearly on *location*: eg provision in mainstream wherever possible, reducing use of out of county special schools. There was some debate around the relative importance of locational and functional inclusion. For example, the manager and support teacher from the hearing-impaired support team thought that the local mainstream option (favoured by demography and parental choice) needed to be better balanced against the option of provision in an area mainstream unit/resource base (which, in their view, might provide better for some children's educational needs).

There was some mention of the 'diversity' agenda. The manager of the support team for physical disabilities described the role of her staff as:

> *supporting schools to enhance their systems for dealing with diversity*

Similarly, the Learning Support teacher interviewed argued that:

> *Schools need to be helped to become more confident to deal with wider diversity. They are still heavily dependent on LSAs (learning support assistants). As inclusion increases, they will see it's more about teacher skills……*

For Behaviour Support staff, the key aspect of inclusion was the development of stronger mainstream ownership.

> *We try to discourage schools from statementing: it's about human rights and education for all. The ethos is that schools should be self-sufficient – we're working ourselves out of a job……*

> *We value .....changing hearts and minds and attitudes; increased ownership – 'I can vs I can't'; teachers feeling better/more confident…….*

However, Behaviour Support did not think that inclusion was about 'mainstream at any cost'.

> *We aim to support schools to maintain pupils within the school. We will 'persist doggedly', but sometimes schools are trying as hard as they can and you have to look for alternatives: we've tried hard to avoid an 'us and them' culture…..*

5.2.2.2 Nature of change

Support service interviewees tended to see the pace of developments as *gradual*[41], with greater need for discussion and negotiation at individual case/school level.

The HI/VI support staff had seen little change in practice. The Learning Support Teacher described the message on inclusion as:

> *'drip-drip: schools gradually preparing themselves but some still not ready'*

Both she and the Behaviour Support Manager saw the style of change as more implicit than overt:

> *We're trying to 'evolve' our functions. There's a 'hidden agenda' for the LSS, to reduce generic work and focus more on school development/more specialist activity; we're trying to avoid work with individual children and to get schools to accept this.*

> *We've 'inferred' senior officer concern about the over-use of off-site/exclusions and are trying to address these.*

5.2.2.3 Enabling factors

The Behaviour Support Manager and her staff shared the AEN manager's view that the development of inclusion in Area A was supported by the local 'political culture'. However a more common response was that inclusion had been more substantially influenced by demography (rural spread) and parental wishes (and support from the voluntary sector). Some schools had also felt that inclusion was the right direction of travel.

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[41] except for the EP practitioners who noted some acceleration/greater push over recent years.

Support service managers and practitioners saw themselves as playing a significant role in turning theory/policy into practice. For example, the SEN adviser and policy officer described support service staff as

> *'Shock troops': it's their key task: they have the intent, skilled practice and promote change at ground level for individual children. There is ample evidence that changes have occurred as a result of 'on the ground' work. Practice leads to policy (by design) which leads to a shift of resources/positive debate.*

One Senior EP argued:

> *Parents might have pushed for inclusion anyway but it would have been more variable/school-dependent. It needs people on the ground to make it work.*

Support service managers and practitioners thought they were more likely to be effective in influencing inclusion if:

(i)   they had sufficient capacity to do so

(ii)   they believed it was right and felt involved in/were contributors to developments

(iii)   there was a good level of cohesion (common beliefs/approaches) across the range of support teams and individual practitioners

The managers of the HI/VI/PD support teams pointed to the benefits of the multi-professional area support teams, which:

> *Avoid duplication/'scattergun' referrals; provide a more systematic link with schools; ensure best use of skills; ensure 'team strength'; 'one-stop shop'; better casework plans and common areas of professional development*

There were mixed views about the degree to which different styles of working (eg consultative approaches vs direct support to individual pupils) were better at fostering inclusive developments. Learning and Behaviour Support staff tended to be more likely to aspire to a teacher/school development role, whereas HI/VI support staff regarded individual pupil support to be a continuing and substantial part of their role. However, they were still

> *…keen to transfer skills/knowledge as far as possible: we tell people to use their common sense; we understand classroom realities/pressures; it's often about awareness raising, reminders to SENCOs about HI/VI needs, positioning etc.*

A key element in support service's contribution to the development of inclusive practice was considered to be the ability to communicate and persuade (head teachers, school staff and parents). As the Behaviour Support teachers argued,

> *Mainstream schools vary regarding inclusion; some need a lot of handholding. There are some conflicting agendas with us: we have had to develop negotiation/support skills and CPD for working with adults.*

5.2.2.4 Barriers:

Barriers reported tended to mirror the enabling factors reported above. In addition, the EP group made reference to the need for more resources, and the LST felt that progress was limited by the lack of a clearer LA policy/strategy for change.

The strongest barrier was seen to be prevailing negative attitudes to inclusion in some mainstream schools, characterised by generalised themes about being expected to admit pupils with extreme difficulties (usually behavioural) with limited additional resources. There was an increasing belief in some schools that they were having to cater for some children who 'would have previously been in special' (school).

A contrast was drawn between school attitudes to some children with disabilities (described as the 'Ah factor') and those where schools felt challenged/disliked the pupil (described as the 'Yuk factor').

Generally, national policy was not mentioned as either a positive or negative factor, though one interviewee (LST) referred to the tension between inclusion and required national standards of attainment.

5.2.2.5 Effects of delegation:

By contrast to the AEN manager's more positive view, support service managers and practitioners tended to be more apprehensive about delegation of service funds to schools. Their main issues were around <u>loss of economies of scale</u>, <u>lack of confidence that schools would assume the associated responsibilities</u>, and <u>loss of capacity for the LA to influence school practice/inclusion</u>.

Support services and teams were seen as offering a pool of specialist expertise that could be drawn on flexibly to meet varying and changing needs. They also ensured some degree of equity in terms of access to support and individual pupil/parent

entitlement. Delegation of funds to schools would mean that this resource was spread too thinly and some individuals would not get the skilled support they needed.

There was also a view that delegation would leave schools more isolated and reduce the opportunities for an accumulation of experience.

The Behaviour Support staff were concerned that there would be less capacity to:

> *Ensure that difficult kids are included…..it could only be achieved with delegation if schools had responsibility for <u>all</u> children.*

Some of the EPs thought that 'safe' delegation would depend on:

> *(a) the schools' commitment to include, and (b) the degree of shared agenda*

One speculated:

> *'Is social exclusion a natural phenomenon ? Do you need an external force/a sustained/central response to include ?'*

There were also concerns about the ability of support staff to challenge (head teacher and school attitudes/practice) if they had to sell their services to schools.

A number of support service interviewees concurred with the AEN Manager's view that delegation to clusters/'community learning partnerships' might be (at least partly) the way forward.

5.2.3   View from schools:

5.2.3.1 Definition of inclusion and nature of change:
The Head Teachers interviewed tended to see inclusion functionally, in terms of provision and support for pupils causing them concern. In their view, there needed to be a gradual approach to extending the range of pupils 'included', which took account of schools' practical constraints and which was accompanied by appropriate resources/ funds and external support.

The secondary Head felt that there had been some 'acceleration' with regard to the local authority's expectations, but that the style remained collaborative and consensual rather than directive:

> *I'm aware there's a bit more force behind this – but I've never been forced to take a pupil I've not wanted to have. It's a collaborative LEA: most Head Teachers want to be helpful.*

He considered that there needed to be 'well-thought out strategies to achieve inclusion at a practical level' and wondered whether these were in place. In particular, he felt that external support was needed in relation to behaviour issues 'to help move things forward'.

The primary Heads felt change had been more gradual, with little change apparent in support services' attitudes/approach.

5.2.3.2 Role of SEN support services and attitudes to delegation of funding

Both primary and secondary Heads saw services as playing a role in supporting schools in meeting pupils' needs. However, they tended to make judgements about individual service/practitioner quality.

In terms of support service activities, they typically favoured support to individual pupils rather than work at the 'whole school' level. The secondary Head accepted that schools in Area A might need support at the school level to develop their SEN practice, but was not confident about the quality of what was available. He saw his own SEN Department as strong/independent and therefore only needing support at the individual level.

He tended to report favourably on the more 'specialist' services (HI/VI/PD) and argue that secondary schools could provide better for most other areas of need (learning/behaviour) directly themselves. He was therefore quite happy with any proposal to delegate funds for the majority of support services, but wanted specialist services and off-site/special provision for children with 'extreme'/exceptional needs to continue to be centrally-retained. In this context, he saw no particular need for an intermediate level of 'community learning partnerships' that managed support and provision at a more local area level.

The primary Heads were also looking for 'direct support' and challenged the desire of the Learning Support Service to focus on 'whole school issues'.

> *They see themselves as 'whole school focused'. They want to use their time effectively but it doesn't match our needs.*

They did not rule out involvement at whole school level, but felt this needed to derive from/be linked closely with work focused on individuals. One Head reported positively of his experience with an EP who

> *Was able to link his response to an individual pupil to a school development approach.*

Primary Heads were less comfortable with any proposal to delegate support service funds. This was partly for reasons of 'economies of scale':

> *Could we do better ourselves ? Currently there is a pool of expertise – if it was delegated, it could be spread too thinly….*

They were also concerned about any implications of transfer of accountability. Access to support services was currently seen as a 'form of insurance', which they wanted to remain available for 'times of need'.

The primary Heads also considered that there was a need for an 'external catalyst' if inclusions was going to move forward.

> *Panic can occur – in this case, someone from outside is needed.*

5.2.4   Overview of findings from Area A:

Senior officers in Area A saw the development of inclusion as being led by Local Authority strategy, which followed from key appointments at senior level and the beliefs/commitments of individuals. Progress on the strategy was being assisted by a culture of collaborative and positive relationships between the Authority and schools (mainstream and special). The emphasis on inclusion was also supported by demographic factors (rurality) and the desire of many parents to have their children educated at their local community mainstream school.

Officers saw support services as playing a key role in implementing inclusion 'on the ground' and this was consistent with the views held by support service managers and practitioners themselves. Support services tended to see such 'practical influence' as more significant than policy/strategy and perceived change as less overt and more down to negotiation/persuasion at the individual child/school level.

Individual support service teams and practitioners had some differences in perspective and beliefs. For example, the manager of the support team for physical disabilities tended to talk about 'implementing children's rights to mainstream'. The Behaviour Support team emphasised the importance of 'securing mainstream ownership of difficult and challenging pupils. The Hearing Impaired Team managers tended to favour mainstream unit/resource base provision as opposed to local community mainstream placement 'for educational reasons'. There were also differences in the preferred style of working. However, there was a general view that support services were more likely to be influential and effective if there was a reasonable levels of cohesion/common purpose.

Support services and officers talked about the need to overcome 'school level factors' (particularly some negative attitudes) and this led them to the view that increased delegation of support service funding would limit the Authority's capacity to influence the development of inclusion. However, a number of interviewees saw some strengths in the proposal to devolve service capacity/funds to cluster ('community learning partnership') level, which might help strengthen local community ownership of children with special educational needs.

The Head Teachers interviewed tended to be more negative about the Local Authority's contribution to the development of inclusion. They tended to emphasise the need for services to be responsive to their more immediate practical concerns and judged support services' contribution according to their perceptions of the quality of individuals who visited their school. In contrast to officer/support service aspirations, they tended to see 'school development' as the internal responsibility of leaders and staff in school, with external services focusing on individual children causing concern. The quality of the Authority's contribution to inclusion was judged by the ability of services to provide meaningful and effective support at this level. Primary school Heads saw a continuing role for external services working to this agenda. The secondary school Head was more

comfortable with the possibility of delegation of service funds, provided that the Authority retained some specialist capacity for 'low incidence needs' (eg physical/ sensory difficulties) and off-site support for more significant challenging behaviour.

5.3   Area B:

5.3.1 View from the 'top':

5.3.1.1 Definition of inclusion

The Assistant Director had recently arrived in post with a personal commitment to bring about greater levels of inclusion, which he tended to define in terms of <u>location</u> (mainstream vs special; in-Borough vs out of Borough) and <u>mainstream ownership</u> (schools more willing and able to provide for children with special educational needs from within their own funding and resources).

5.3.1.2 Barriers to change

He outlined a number of barriers that made progress towards greater inclusion more difficult. The first of these related to <u>lack of overall funding/resources</u>. The Borough had suffered from its initial resistance to the introduction of the Council Tax and had few financial reserves left to protect schools from budget reductions during the 1990s. As a consequence, it had to make substantial reductions in its level of central services. The Authority had claimed that it was delegating funding for these so that schools could buy in services or make their own arrangements. However, in practice, officers had found it hard to assert increased expectations of schools as schools were not receiving significant additions to their overall budgets. The Assistant Director reported:

> *There was no clear link between delegation and increased school responsibility: schools just saw it as 'cuts in central services'.*

The overall lack of resources was limiting the Assistant Director's ability to develop a more substantial support service capacity, which he felt was needed to help drive forward the inclusion agenda.

> *I would like more central support service capacity (core), for advice and monitoring (strategic role). But this is an unlikely option as there are no funds available. The only mechanism would be schools purchasing, or release of money from other SEN 'pots' (eg out of Borough placements).*
>
> *The core does not need to be large – but needs to be credible and have a strategic influence.*

Schools are under untold pressures: multi-agency support is needed particularly for EBD (emotional and behaviour difficulties), stage 3 work and behaviour support.

His ability to develop greater strategic capacity was also inhibited by the Council's political position, which saw external services as playing a 'minimalist' role, with remaining providers mostly working on a 'business unit'/sold services model.

In practice, most of the residual SEN support service capacity was tied up with 'statutory functions', and there was little support and intervention available to deter schools from seeking statements for additional funds or specialist provision.

In reality, there's a 'stage 3 funding gap'.

5.3.1.3 Overcoming barriers

One of the key tasks that the Assistant Director had started to address was to create a stronger unified agenda/sense of cohesion across the existing range of support teams, which he saw as essential to achieving a common strategic direction for inclusion. This was against a background where different support teams had been encouraged to see themselves as separate 'business units', sometimes competing with each other for the same 'market'. In the Assistant Director's view, this had shifted service priorities away from strategic/inclusive development towards more short-term responses to individual 'customer (school) needs'.

Historically there have been issues within the support services: the separate business unit philosophy has meant there has been no overarching view: people 'did their own thing' as professionally as possible (with their own separate targets). I am now trying to get people to sign up to a philosophy and reflect on how they can influence practice.

One of the other main barriers affecting inclusive developments was the 'inherited culture' of special school placement and the limited expectations that the local authority had about moving from this tradition.

*I see myself as driving this: there are few 'top-down barriers' and I have had support from the previous Chief Education Officer and Chair of Education…….
but not strong encouragement from them.*

The LEA needs to articulate its expectations more clearly: we need to develop local performance indicators linked to LEA/Council strategic objectives: these may be in conflict with traditional expectations.

Support services (in the past) have not been particularly supportive of inclusion (eg 'this is a special school child'). The Panel historically just looked at special vs mainstream: they are now tending to ask 'what would be needed to enable local mainstream ?' We need a casework element to carry this through.....

5.3.1.4 Nature of change

In the light of this range of barriers, the Assistant Director saw the pace of change as likely to be <u>gradual</u>.

Change will be slow – not as quick as I would like. We're starting from a low point in terms of expectations on schools.

There had been some changes to the process of handling statutory assessment requests, in terms of shifts in support service expectations, but

Mainstream schools are not happy about this, and we're therefore having to phase it in.

This more pragmatic view was balanced by a desire for a more overt and explicit policy approach:

We need to front this with schools at a strategic level: through consultative processes and strategic review groups; also by support services themselves, the clarity of their role and the way this is articulated. We can't hide this – it's up to me and the CEO to support (he then stresses the importance of dialogue and effective relationships with schools).

Just giving money to schools will not make inclusion happen: it needs a more clearly managed system to move in that direction – this is a core LEA role.

5.3.2 Support service manager/practitioner (+ Finance Officer) views:

5.3.2.1 Definitions of inclusion

References to inclusion within support service manager/practitioner interviews related typically to locational issues. However, there was some variety in emphasis. Some interviewees saw inclusion as increasing mainstream access/reducing numbers of placements in special schools. Others focused more on reducing use of out of Borough special schools, with the expectation that success here might mean little overall impact on in-Borough special school numbers. There were differing views about the benefits of

having units/resource bases in some mainstream schools, as opposed to developing capacity in all mainstream settings.

The SEN casework officers adopted a more functional approach:

> *Our approach to inclusion is 'needs-led' – it should take account of the complexity of needs and any changes in this. We shouldn't lose the human side (eg by setting numerical targets for reduction in special school numbers). Our concerns are about quality/meaningful inclusion/genuine progress. Special school reductions are only likely if strategic mainstream developments are in place....*

Service managers with responsibility for providing for excluded pupils (the Head of the Pupil Referral Unit and the Head of the Education Support Service, managing Home Tuition) tended to define inclusion in terms of access to education:

> *For excluded pupils, the key is access to a full timetable (to achieve this, we will need to increase the amount of groupwork and provide additional PRU capacity).*

The Principal Educational Psychologist and the SEN Adviser, while mentioning locational issues, also tended to emphasise the 'inclusion' of special schools within the broader system.

> *There's an 'island mentality' – no coherence/cohesion across special provision.* (PEP)

> *Special schools are traditionally isolated/'doing their own thing'. I agree with the 'inclusion vision' – I would like to see special school developments (integration and outreach work to mainstream)....a multi-disciplinary intervention team, and local mainstream units to avoid out of Borough placements.* (SEN Adviser)

5.3.2.2 Nature of change

Support service manager/practitioner/officer responses generally matched the view of the Assistant Director, that change would be gradualist, given current constraints. The Finance Officer was relatively pessimistic:

> *I don't see any real changes in provision as likely (out-Borough may go up !): we're trying to hold things at current levels. There may be some capacity for recycling out of Borough expenditure but this could go to SEN or be used more generally.......*

The SEN Adviser expected developments to be:

> *Small steps/opportunistic – we have to take account of school independence/self-management*

The EP practitioner group felt there was:

> *A long way to go: we need to beef up our questions about the possibility of inclusion – assume it's possible. We need an action plan, but not yet (the climate isn't right and there is also the funding problem..)*

In this context, change needed to be collaborative. However, some of those interviewed expressed frustration about the absence of a clearer, more explicit LA agenda to guide developments in practice. For example, the SEN casework officers commented:

> *At the moment, things have to be done by stealth rather than policy. There are no long-term or short-term plans – it's all down to individuals……*

5.3.2.3 Enabling factors

Service managers and practitioners did not identify strong 'enabling factors' for the development of inclusion operating at the broader Local Authority level. Typically, LA-level aspects were identified as 'barriers' limiting what support services themselves could achieve.

Individual services had developed their own agendas. For example, the PEP reported:

> *Before 1995, EPs were trying to push for greater inclusion. They then had control over the statutory assessment process, but the move to a single SEN officer making these decisions and diminished EP influence made it more cumbersome to achieve change.*

> *EPs are still pro-inclusion but they are dependent on resources being available/their ability to convince schools……and there is some variability in (EP) views.*

Despite the changes in decision-making practice, the SEN casework officers still saw EPs as playing a key role in developing more inclusive mainstream practice:

> *We don't expect them to make the judgement but they need to be involved. They are our vehicle for insisting on good practice/quality in school SEN provision.*

Other support services referred to the impact their casework/approach might have on achieving inclusive outcomes for individual pupils. For example, the Behaviour Support practitioner reported:

> *Schools are likely to ask me to be involved if the child has complex needs and their LSA (learning support assistant) doesn't have a good level of knowledge. If I'm not available, I try to make room by dropping other commitments – it puts inclusion at risk if we cannot respond…….*

In this context, a key factor was the individual practitioner's personal beliefs:

> *Where there's a conflicting agenda, then the Head Teacher gets involved and it's down to negotiation, but I'm clear what I'm trying to do. If the child is statemented, I have a <u>moral</u> case to argue about the child's needs.*

Support services felt that, in the absence of stronger school, parent and LA commitment to inclusion, much was down to their capacity to influence/persuade. For example, the PRU Head reported that mainstream schools were generally resistant to the readmission of excluded pupils, '*even when this is appropriate*'.

> *There is no LEA-wide commitment to take pupils back – it's down to persuasion and the credibility of PRU staff...*

While services saw little support in terms of support at LA policy level, some managers recognised the steps that had been taken to develop greater cohesion across the range of support teams, and the importance of this process in moving forward with the inclusion agenda:

> *We're starting to re-build the links - through promoting school-based service meetings* (PEP).
>
> *There's a new emphasis on everyone working together towards the same goals, and an expectation that we're more involved* (PRU Head).

The PRU Head and the SEN Adviser were also drawing some support from national policy and funding initiatives.

5.3.2.4 Barriers

Support service managers and practitioners reported a wide range of barriers affecting the development of inclusion in Area B. Most shared the Assistant Director's view that there was a lack of resources, at LA, school and support service level. They also

referred to the strong '*inherited tradition*' of special schooling within the Borough, and the associated <u>low expectations</u> around promoting mainstream access.

A number of those interviewed considered that significant progress could only be achieved if there was a clearer policy and a stronger 'lead from the top', which also addressed the practical implications.

> *It needs to come from the top: there needs to be clarity about objectives, and an action plan, and practical ways forward. At the moment, we have the theory but no practice*. (SEN Casework Officers)

> *The Service Plan says 'promote inclusion'; but we're not sure how* (Head of Education Support Service).

> *We could evaluate change if the LEA had an explicit/clear policy: exclusion targets have worked, so why are they not there for inclusion?* (SEN Adviser).

In addition to the need for greater central service capacity, there was a view that there was still some way to go in achieving more consistent beliefs and practice amongst the existing range of support teams and practitioners.

Interviewees considered that a major barrier to developments in inclusion was the history of poor relationships between the Authority and its schools. The Finance Officer reported that:

> *Head Teachers have been very critical of central costs* (historical image of the Council, including view that 'school funds' had been diverted for other purposes) *and are very challenging to the Authority – both primary and secondary: there was a big move to GM* (grant-maintained status).

The move towards GM had made it more difficult for the LA to engage schools in shared policy developments and collaborative working.

This had also meant that it had become more difficult to challenge schools, with a strong shift in the balance of power.

Head teachers were seen as being 'resistant to' and 'suspicious of' inclusion.

> *They see it as a cost-cutting measure* (PEP).

> *The SEN policy now refers to inclusion, but there is a lot of uncertainty about this in schools* (EP practitioner group).

There were also barriers in the levels of <u>accountability</u> mainstream schools had for meeting children's special educational needs:

> *Not all schools know what they've got for SEN or what they are spending. It's not being well-monitored* (PEP).
>
> *Responsibility for SEN is a difficult issue – it's sensitive to manage with schools* (Head of Education Support Service).
>
> *We have a 'minimalist approach': we set guidelines and give them a push, but basically it's up to them* (SEN Adviser).

In this context, <u>national policy</u> was seen as a barrier to the development of inclusion in so far as it gave Local Authorities too little power to influence practice and expectations at the school level. As the SEN Adviser commented,

> *Our potential 'monitoring' role is in conflict with the Government Code of Practice (on LEA-school relations) which says intervention should be in inverse proportion to success. An inspection focus is only allowed in schools that are seen as failing.*

In the Adviser's view, the Government's (and OfSTED's) criteria for judging school success and failure did not take sufficient account of practice in relation to pupils with special educational needs.

5.3.2.5 Effects of delegation

Views among support services about the effects of delegation were strongly influenced by previous experience. The Head of the (residual) Education Support Service had a positive view:

> *It has helped in making support services more accountable/professional within schools. It has been constructive and led to an improvement in schools' response.*

She felt comfortable about working to the school agenda:

> *If I was CEO, I'd consult with schools about what they want and try to develop this while retaining school control/ownership. If they want direct teaching, we'll do it…… no problem !*

The SEN Adviser felt that delegation had led to schools taking some of the associated responsibilities on board. However, he considered that the Local Authority still needed to retain a (smaller) central support team, with a more strategic role/more specialist expertise, commenting:

> *The LEA is schizophrenic – it wobbles between recreating services and dispersing/disbanding them !*

Most support service managers and practitioners were more negative about the impact of delegation. The main concerns were around potential <u>misuse of funds</u> (and loss of pupil entitlements), <u>lack of transfer of responsibility</u>, and <u>loss of central capacity</u> to influence the development of inclusion.

> *In an ideal world, <u>all</u> money should be with schools, but they are not equipped (they need something central): schools need to be clearer about the money they've got – how they're spending it. Head Teachers don't look at their own resources: they've lost consciousness of their devolved funding* (SEN casework officer).

> *Monitoring is very important; delegation needs to be carefully managed. You can't have LEA accountability without some capacity* (SEN casework officer).

> *Delegation has little effect – there's no real change of responsibility; there are still the same expectations of the LA's role. Schools vary in their ability and the amount of money (delegated to them) is quite small* (EP practitioners).

> *Where we're not bought in, there's a concern that children might not be getting the teaching they need* (Learning Support Teacher in ESS (sold service)).

> *Delegation of stage 3 capacity has led to an increase in statements to access Teacher of the Deaf input and there is now a lack of educational input for a range of pupils with less severe hearing impairment, and a poor response to Health Authority notifications* (Teacher of the Deaf, now working predominantly with statemented pupils).

The Head of the Education Support Service, who had been more positive than her colleagues about the effects of delegation, also had concerns about the responsibility issue:

> *Monitoring is a big issue – if SEN is the responsibility of the LEA, then how is this discharged ?*

Other disadvantages included the potential <u>loss of specialist skills</u> ('*it's difficult for schools to find such staff*') and <u>increased isolation</u> for staff in schools ('*you need someone central to turn to (as a SENCO): the Head Teacher has other responsibilities*')

In discussion, the EP practitioner group reflected on the potentially difficult relationships that arose from needing to balance the expectations of 'client' (LEA) and 'customer' (schools, parents).

> *If things were more explicit strategically (for example, in relation to monitoring and reviewing resources, it might cause tensions……..*

5.3.3   View from schools:

The Head Teacher view in Area B was limited by the lack of secondary school representation in the interview sample, and the fact that two of the three primary Heads were also support team managers[42]. These two Heads tended to talk about the positive outcomes for their schools (staff and pupils) from having a specialist mainstream unit on site. They were less clear about the effects of the fragmentation and devolution of central support service capacity, although they did identify some advantages of peripatetic support staff being managed by mainstream Head Teachers (who colleague Heads '*could relate to*'.

5.3.3.1 The need for central capacity
The other mainstream primary Head Teacher had much more to say in relation to the issues that are the focus of the current research. She was particularly keen to emphasise the importance of having a strong central (LA) capacity to help things move schools forward on inclusion.

She described inclusion within the Borough as '*a good mantra, but with no investment*' and was critical of the 'devolved approach':

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[42] One was the Head of a mainstream nursery, which had a unit for preschool hearing-impaired children. She had been given management responsibility (with funding) for the peripatetic preschool hearing-impaired support staff. The other was Head of a mainstream primary school with a unit for visually-impaired children, who had been given management responsibility (and funding) for the primary and secondary VI support team.

The LEA has fully devolved the budget yet hasn't achieved inclusion. Exclusions have risen and mainstream inclusion hasn't changed. We need support to achieve greater inclusion – it needs people from outside to kickstart….

She associated the delegation of 'stage 3 services' with an increase in demands from head teachers for statements and additional resources. This was partly because schools no longer had access to external support for 'general learning difficulties' and partly because Heads saw delegation as a 'cut' and were using statementing '*to reclaim support*' that they had lost. She felt that funding changes had happened too quickly and that Heads had not been sufficiently clear about the expected transfer of responsibilities.

5.3.3.2 View of national policy

She saw national policy (the SEN Code of Practice) as unhelpful to the development of inclusion in schools as it had concentrated on processes and procedures, and access to resources, with pressure on the local authority because of statutory expectations and deadlines.

5.3.4   Overview of findings from Area B:

The senior officer in Area B had similar beliefs and aspirations to his counterpart in Area A. However, his capacity to influence development was considerably limited by the local context. Funding for SEN, both in schools and at the 'centre' was seen as restricted, with little room to manoeuvre. There was a strong tradition of relatively autonomous special schools, with associated beliefs among some professionals that such placements were the best option for many children. Compared to Area A, there was a cultural history of weaker collaboration between schools and poorer relationships between schools and the Authority (with a high number of schools having opted for grant-maintained status). Politically, the Council had been relatively comfortable with a 'business/marker philosophy', with limited commitment to the Local Authority having a role in 'external challenge' to schools.

The 'business unit' culture had led to a fragmented range of support service elements, which the senior officer was trying to bring together around a common philosophy. This was recognised by support service/team managers, although it was felt that there was still 'a long way to go'. There were some significant differences in beliefs and levels of

optimism about the viability of reductions in special school numbers, both within the Authority and the independent/non-maintained ('out Borough') sector.

Although both the senior officer and support service managers/practitioners aspired to a 'braver', more top-down, policy-led change, in practice the capacity to be direct/overt about this with schools was limited. Given the current range of barriers at school and local authority level, change was seen by some as more likely to be achieved 'by stealth'.

The senior officer and support service managers/practitioners considered that support services could/should play a significant role in the development of inclusion in Area B. However, limited staffing restricted their capacity to do so. Delegation of support service funds in the 1990s was seen as having had little impact on mainstream school responsibility/commitment to pupils with SEN, and there was no way that a more sizeable central capacity could be recreated with current financial pressures. The senior officer's best option, in his view, was to try and ensure that existing support teams and managers worked more coherently and effectively together.

It was only possible to get a limited school perspective in Area B. However, the primary mainstream Head Teacher tended to concur with officers/support services about the limited effects of delegation on inclusion in schools and the need for a healthy level of central resource to 'kickstart' progress in this area. The other Heads also pointed to the benefits of peer influence in relation to existing good practice.

5.3   Area C:
5.4.1   View from the 'top':

5.4.1.1 Definition of inclusion and nature of change:
The initial interview with senior officers (CEO, Senior Education Officer and SEN Adviser) encompassed a range of differing perspectives. All agreed that the new unitary Local Authority had inherited a 'positive and inclusive ethos' from the previous larger Authority, of which it had been a part. However, the origins of this ethos/culture were less easy to identify.

Emphases with regard to inclusion varied somewhat, with the CEO referring to a philosophy of '*mainstream wherever possible*', while the Senior Officer (who had a

finance background) tended to emphasise a reduction in out of Borough placements. The SEN Adviser (seconded from his substantive post as Head of a local special school) spoke of the LA's emphasis on 'community schools/clusters' and a *tradition of special schools being involved*.

The CEO set out a strong view that developments towards greater inclusion needed to be <u>collaborative</u>, non-directive and if possible '*school-led*':

> *You can't force changes in practice, change cultures or make people comply. The best strategy is to try and influence by demonstrating good practice.*

He saw the LEA as assisting and influencing schools in their development planning, with central services then working to support their agenda.

By contrast, the Senior Education Officer and SEN Adviser wanted the Local Authority to play a more <u>directive</u> role:

> *We're looking for a policy to have some <u>influence</u> as well as reflecting existing practice/ ethos – eg improved special/mainstream school links; better mainstream access and reintegration opportunities for special school pupils* (Senior Education Officer).
>
> *It will be important to change schools – we need to get them to request the right things eg school development not just 1:1 support* (SEN Adviser).

However, all tended to agree that change needed to be gradual:

> *Our policy will need to 'permeate' across the Department. We will try to describe/establish principles – targets will come later: they need to be based on sound <u>educational</u> reasons, as opposed to financial……..*(SEN Adviser).

The SEN Officer and SEN Adviser saw the development of a LA policy on inclusion as being an important step. They also considered it important to involve support services in the process of more specific development planning, '*so that they own it*'. The CEO saw schools as being involved through the formal processes of school and local authority development planning, with agreement on priorities being '*explicitly*' obtained.

5.4.1.2 Support services and the delegation of funding

The emphasis on school ownership of developments led all three interviewees to be more positive about support service delegation than their counterparts in the other 2

Areas. In the CEO's view, delegation was consistent with his view of how LEA-school relationships ought to be:

> *Schools lead, the LEA serves. If the SEN Support Service can convince schools they are needed, they'd go a long way to convincing us….it's up to the service to market itself with schools.*

For the Senior Education Officer, the principle of 'school self-determination' appeared to take precedence over any issues relating to transfer of responsibility. He described the situation with regard to the delegation of funds for the Behaviour Support Team;

> *The schools wanted delegation against my advice. I listed the pros and cons. However, I said to members that we should listen to schools. Although I'm concerned about whether the responsibility has transferred with the cash, we have gained credibility with the schools for having listened* (the main issues here were about schools' views around service quality).

Neither the CEO nor the SEO had any particular concerns about the size and extent of the SEN support service, which they saw as determined by the 'market'. The SEN Adviser had a different view:

> *The SENSS will disappear if we get it right and schools develop greater ownership. Having a large SENSS is a negative performance indicator. There's a need for a better balance between 'core' and 'delegated' functions.*

However, the SEO and CEO were concerned about potential loss of economies of scale:

> *The SENSS still offers economies of scale and quality. We need to be concerned about 'critical mass' – eg how the service can be managed/delivered if 'buyback'* (from schools) *drops too far.*

5.4.2   Support service manager/practitioner views:

5.4.2.1 Definitions of inclusion

Typically support service managers and practitioners referred to locational aspects. Most agreed that they should be working towards keeping children and young people locally within the Borough wherever possible. The one exception was the Head of the Hearing Impaired Service which was working on a 'joint arrangement' across a number of other Authorities. In her view,

> *Placement should be dependent on need.*

Some considered that there was unlikely to be much change in the numbers of pupils being admitted to in-Borough special schools, now that these had been reorganised to cater for children who might have previously gone out of Area.

There was some variation in the extent to which interviewees expected 'inclusion' to involve placement in the child's local mainstream school (as opposed to one with a unit/ resource base). For example, the special school Head interviewed wanted to achieve mainstream access at the child's '*local neighbourhood school rather than a specific school linked to special*'. The Head of the SEN Support Service had disbanded a number of mainstream units managed by her service as '*the host schools tended to fill them with their own kids anyway*'.

The Head of the HI service thought that, despite a reduction in use of specialist provision for deaf and hearing impaired children there would always be a:

> *.....hard core who can't be included in their local mainstream school (or for whom there are signing/deaf culture issues) who need resource base provision – sometimes parents want local mainstream and we don't think this is best: we say 'give it a go' and use a 'fluid communication approach !'*

The general LA policy on mainstreaming was reported to be '*mainstream wherever possible, dependent on parental preference – most often parents want this*' (Preschool/ ASD support team). The SEN/statementing officer included both of these aspects in her casework decisions which were based on the following:

> (i)   *best fit to the child's individual needs*
> (ii)   *the LA's inclusion policy/expectations ('mainstream and in-Borough wherever possible)*
> (iii) *budget/economics*
> (iv)   *parents' wishes – 'a significant element'*
> (v)   *'workable compromise'*

Differing definitions and emphases with regard to inclusion were brought out in the interview with the group of EP practitioners. One EP saw the Local Authority as '*non-inclusive: special school numbers have risen again and they have waiting lists – and we have lost some of our mainstream units*'. Another considered that the limited use of special school provision was down to '*historical legacy and the fact that we are a rural area*' rather than to any existing '*inclusive practice*'. Another argued that the Local

Authority was '*not inclusive as it is taking no clear steps to reintegrate children who are already in out of Borough or in Borough special schools*'. One EP took a different viewpoint, that '*the LEA and schools are already inclusive – and this needs to be better recognised'*.

The special school Head tended to refer to inclusion more broadly, identifying the range of ways in which he tried to provide access for his pupils to activities 'within the community' and the plans to give special schools a wider set of roles and functions (split placements/inreach/outreach etc). He also adopted a more functional view of inclusion, which he felt was necessary to move from theory to effective practice:

> *We need to develop a clearer role for supporting mainstream inclusion: we need to clarify our expectations of what the child needs to achieve inclusion: we need statements of principle and individual initiatives – concepts of inclusion are very variable (and support approaches).*

The Head of the support service for physical disability tended to emphasise disability access issues (adaptations) as well as children's rights to a mainstream education.

5.4.2.2 Nature of change

Most interviewees concurred with the senior officers in regarding change as <u>gradualist</u>, and dependent on collaboration with schools. For some, gradualism was synonymous with relative inactivity:

> *There's been a bit of a drift in Area C in terms of school access, but it's now improving* (Head of Support Service for PD).

> *There's no clear push for local mainstream: it's down to us and parental wishes. There would probably be some resistance if the inclusion trend (which pre-dates unitary status) was reversed….* (Head of Support Service for HI).

A number of interviewees referred to the Authority's '*strong affiliation culture with schools'*:

> *The secondary Heads are powerful: the LEA 'jumps'* (Head of BSS/PRU)

> *You work in the way that schools want you to and build up relationships* (Learning Support Teacher).

> *There's a strong 'trust the schools' culture in Area C* (SEN officer)

This was not always seen as positive in terms of achieving the changes in practice and attitudes that some interviewees thought were necessary:

> *There is a long ethos of mainstream inclusion (some forward-thinking Heads): we need to maintain this and possibly achieve a small increase in mainstream access (dependent on resources) – this would need to be pushed by the LEA/support services: there are currently barriers around primary-secondary transfer* (Head of SENSS).

> *I'm a strong believer in top-down policy-led change* (PEP).

There was evidence that the mismatch between the official 'culture' and the aspirations of individual officers and services was leading to some change occurring in a more covert/implicit way:

> *We've 'inferred' the LEA's desire to increase mainstream access* (Preschool/ASD team)

> *We have an implicit policy on inclusion – mainscale EPs are relatively positive, though there's a range of opinion* (PEP)

> *Staff should act in line with LEA policy (on SEN and inclusion) but not convey it* (SEN Officer).

5.4.2.3 Enabling factors

Nearly all interviewees, like the senior officers, referred to the '*inclusive ethos/culture*' that had been inherited from the previous larger Authority.

> *Custom and practice has built up over time – people are trying very hard to include* (SEN Officer)

Some interviewees gave their views about how this culture had been developed and transmitted. The special school Head attributed it to some early examples of good practice:

> *The tradition pre-dates the creation of Area C. In the late 80s, there were a number of very inclusive and well-publicised mainstream schools; also a number of MLD mainstream units (but these no longer exist); also a number of SLD children (about 15-20) were being supported in mainstream schools.*

The Head of the SENSS attributed the transmission of the culture to transfer of some key individuals at the point of local authority reorganisation:

Mainstream schools would say the SENSS is strong on inclusion and that is my philosophy. The policy dates from the days of the old Authority. Area C inherited some key people.

There was also reference to the inherited patterns of special provision, which were relatively circumscribed, and to the tendency of parents to opt for mainstream.

Although some references were made to the Local Authority's policy on inclusion, this was seen in fairly general terms and at an early stage of development.

In the absence of a more explicit policy, interviewees tended to talk more about the influence of support service beliefs and activities. For example, the PEP commented:

We've always rated it (inclusion) – for egalitarian reasons. Special schools offer nothing different/not a unique pedagogy. Most kids are better in mainstream.

The Head of the support service for physical disability, which was based in a regional special school, said:

The school is philosophically pro-inclusion/disability access: we are therefore very positive about our mainstream support role.

The Head of the SENSS reported:

There's a culture of inclusion within the service – it would take a lot to turn, it's not just dependent on me.

Beliefs were backed up by activities that interviewees felt made a significant contribution to the development of inclusive practice. These included:

(i)   *challenge to negative/non-inclusive schools* (PEP)

(ii)   *help and advice to parents and schools receiving pupils with complex needs* (Preschool/ASD team)

(iii)   *training* (Preschool/ASD; SENSS manager; PD & HI support managers)

(iv)   *direct teaching, leading to credible advice* (Learning Support Teacher)

On the other hand, some felt that support service practitioner/officer beliefs alone were not sufficient to achieve the changes necessary, which required a greater level of power and direction.

5.4.2.4 Barriers

The main barriers to the development of inclusion were seen as <u>school attitudes</u>:

> *If mainstream schools block admission, we talk to parents and staff and seek to influence them. If there are continuing problems, we talk to officers* (Preschool/ASD team)

> *There are some issues around phase transfer eg resistance over admissions. Schools also vary in their expectations (eg degree of pupil independence)* (PD service manager)

For some interviewees (eg Behaviour Support), negative school attitudes were reinforced by the Local Authority's prevailing school affiliation culture.

Reference was also made to the fragmentary nature of the existing support service teams, which led to some lack of cohesion, and to the absence of a clear strategy for development:

> *We're reactive, not strategic: there's no clear vision, though there's a will. It's too fragmented – do schools see the LEA as 'we' ?* (Head of BSS/PRU).

> *Support services are working discretely: there's not much overlap or collaboration in practice* (group of EP practitioners)

> *The mainstream response is variable and we need a cohesive core of centrally-retained staff (we don't have this). Services need to be more unified. There needs to be more emphasis on a unified role rather than different elements for different kinds of need. A big task for the LEA is the SEN Development Plan. It needs to 'mould' the service that the LEA has responsibility for (including the contribution of its special schools)* (Head of Special School).

5.4.2.5 Effects of delegation

The Head of the SENSS was very positive about the delegation of her service funds to schools. She outlined her rationale as follows:

> *The SENSS now works on a 'zero-based budgeting basis' (no central funding). Our income is 50% from our stage 3 work and 50% from our work with statemented pupils. I have wanted this for a number of years but couldn't convince Head Teachers of its necessity and value. I see the purchasing relationship as more honest (Heads have to commit to it). I'm not driven by selling – I want to move schools on and am happy if they don't buy if they are capable. Staff are happy about the arrangement – we did plenty of consultation. We have greater freedom through income generation possibilities. It happened in the end because of pressures from the Government ('Fair Funding'). Local Authorities had to increase the amount of funding delegated to schools.*

She saw no conflict between a 'sold service' model and the service's ability to move schools towards more inclusive practice:

> *I don't see central retention as crucial for inclusion: it's more about the support service's commitment and ability to influence schools. They wouldn't buy us in if they were looking to exclude ! We have to take a stance – it increases our marketability.*

Some other interviewees endorsed her view that delegation might help schools develop stronger <u>ownership</u> and increase their <u>flexibility</u> to meet needs (through using funds to enhance their own resources). The PEP also considered that delegation of the SENSS had enhanced its quality and professionalism.

However, there were some concerns more generally about the variability between schools and the danger that, in some cases, resources might be misused (with pupils no longer accessing their entitlements). There were particular issues around schools' decisions to purchase learning support assistant (LSA) rather than support teacher time.

There were also concerns about the potential <u>loss of economies of scale</u>, particularly in terms of more specialist skills for pupils with 'low incidence' needs (such as sensory/ physical disabilities), and about the diversion of service energy away from more strategic activity.

Some interviewees expressed scepticism about the ability of a 'sold service' to promote longer-term self-sufficiency. This was borne out to some extent by the interview with the Learning Support Teacher who commented as follows:

> *Our Head of Service always wanted us to go out on our own and has prepared schools for this. There's more pressure for us. Schools are happy to buy in and are getting what they want, but they were ok with the Service before too. It's really been a paper exercise: responsibility hasn't transferred in most schools.*
>
> *Ultimately the level of buyback will depend on the LEA's 'steer' (eg increased expectations of the SENCO role – primary schools are resistant to this)….We've survived a long time: originally there were doubters but there's been a lot of demand.*
>
> *There's a problem if school-based provision works: this might affect us.*

5.4.3   View from schools:

5.4.3.1 Definition of inclusion and nature of change:

The Head Teachers and SENCOs interviewed tended to refer to inclusion in terms of mainstreaming, although there was some reference by secondary Heads to the Government's broader social inclusion agenda. The secondary Heads tended to see inclusion as something externally imposed rather than internally generated and some were critical of what they saw as the 'government's agenda'.

> *Mainstream schools are now receiving pupils who would have gone to special.*
>
> *More pupils should be in special. I'm against the OfSTED/DfEE inclusion agenda and agree with the NAHT* (National Association of Head Teachers) *wanting the 'power to say No'. We should think about the needs of the majority.*

Some SENCOs also saw inclusion as being about:

> *………the LEA wanting us to keep EBD in mainstream*

Neither Heads nor SENCOs saw any evidence of significant moves to developing greater inclusion in their Authority:

> *We're not aware of any clear policy/strategy on this – there's nothing obvious* (Heads)
>
> *There's been some discussion about inclusion before, but not a big push in this Authority ……. no evidence as yet* (SENCOs)

One primary Head thought that inclusion had *'already been happening before the new Authority was created'*.

Both Heads and SENCOs tended to see inclusion as dependent on the provision of additional support at individual pupil level (via statements or other sources). SENCOs tended to see support services as making a useful contribution, which they evaluated in terms of the 'practical quality of advice and training' and 'interpersonal factors' – *'who fits into your team and whether you can work with them'*.

Barriers to inclusion were seen in terms of *'lack of resources'*. However, the interview with Head Teachers suggested there was also a significant issue around schools' level of

accountability for inclusive practice and outcomes, compared with other expectations. One secondary Head argued:

> *I accept responsibility for most DfEE targets, but inclusion/social inclusion are* <u>*the LEA's,*</u> *not mine – I don't have to follow them…….*

5.4.3.2 SEN support services and delegation of funding

In Area C, the significant majority of SEN support service funds had already been delegated to schools. When the Heads group was asked about whether this had achieved any transfer of responsibility, most said 'none'. However, one primary Head commented:

> *We now have accountability for spending money wisely – value for money pressure sharpens our focus.*

And another Head accepted responsibility for:

> *….monitoring the budget and targets for SEN pupils: we used to hand over responsibility for this.*

As most schools were continuing to buy back time from the Authority's SEN Support Service, the main advantages from delegation were seen to be the right to *'expect better quality'* and have some control over the allocation of personnel to their school. A small number of Heads were using the funding more flexibly (usually to increase their own Learning Support Assistant time).

Some Heads were choosing to use the Authority's support service *'for insurance reasons'*. For example, one secondary Head regarded the Behaviour Support Team as:

> *…..poor quality – but we still buy their time as 'insurance' – a 'catchnet' in case we want to exclude.*

One primary Head (who had chosen not to purchase SENSS time) was concerned that she *'might have reduced access to statutory assessments'*.

Head Teachers' expectations of support service contributions were typically around providing direct support to individuals rather than *'just advisory/training work'*. SENCOs tended to see support service input as '*specialist*' even in the case of children

with relatively mild/moderate/specific learning difficulties. When asked about alternative options for using delegated funds, they indicated a relatively high level of dependence:

> *The money could release the SENCO for specialised teaching – that could work, but it depends on the school, quality and availability of the staff. However, we're not as qualified as Learning Support Teachers to teach in a specialised way and have no access to specialised resources. We'd need the courage to 'go it alone' – we might need support from someone else.*

A minority of Heads and SENCOs, however, were *'becoming more confident'* and thought that schools might consider more flexible use of delegated funding in the future.

5.4.4 Overview of findings from Area C:

Area C, as a new Unitary Authority, had inherited an 'inclusive culture/ethos'. Evidence from the interviews suggests that this had resulted partly from the beliefs of key individuals, demography and parental wishes, as well as particular examples of inclusive practice in some mainstream schools.

Within the new Authority, interviews with senior officers indicated a discrepancy of view about the process for generating future developments, between the Director of Education, who adopted a strong philosophy of 'school-led change' and the SEN Adviser and Senior Education Officer who wanted something more strategic/Local Authority-led.

For the CEO, the process of change was explicit, with the Local Authority setting a broad agenda through its EDP (Education Development Plan) and schools taking some account of this in their individual development plans. Local Authority service providers were ancillary to this process, with schools/Head Teachers having a right to expect the service they wanted. A 'sold service' relationship was a logical consequence of this model. If schools chose to increase or reduce their level of 'buyback', this was simply a reflection of the service's 'market value'.

The SEN Adviser, on the other hand, questioned the legitimacy of schools purchasing an external service to deliver what they should really be providing themselves (ie direct teaching for individuals/groups of children) and expected Local Authority services to be smaller/more strategic and advisory.

In practice, in Area C, there was no strong evidence of a Local Authority 'push' to increase levels of inclusion. Although officers were generally keen to reduce use of out of Authority placements, the expectation was that numbers in the Borough's own special schools would *'remain relatively stable or increase slightly'*. SEN officers and support services reported a reluctance to challenge negative school attitudes, with a pragmatic approach to casework built around *'workable compromise'*.

The dispersal of support services/teams across a range of separate providers (EPS, SNSS, BSS, regional sensory support service and PD special school) meant that there was some lack of cohesion between support service 'agendas'. In particular, there was some distrust that the strongly 'market-driven' approach of the SENSS reinforced a culture of limited challenge and over-dependence of schools on Local Authority services and provision.

The view of the manager of the SEN Support Service herself was that *'challenge is marketable'*: that the professional beliefs of the support service and its leadership were more important than the Service's funding sources. However, there was some evidence from interviews (with one service practitioner and the group of mainstream SENCOs) that over-dependence might be an issue.

The predominant Head Teacher view among those interviewed was that inclusion was externally imposed and the result of a *'national agenda'*. They did not see a strong expectation of further development at local level and reported that they would resist this. In the absence of a key emphasis on inclusion within the Authority's Development Plan, schools were following their own strategic priorities, which, in the view of one secondary Head, did not include 'inclusion' (for which schools had little accountability themselves).

5.5   Overall picture from the 3 LA case studies and discussion:

Some key overall themes emerge from the formal analysis of the three Local Authority case studies (see Table 11 below).

Table 11:   Cross-case display of findings from the 3 DfEE/NASEN case studies

	Area A	Area B	Area C
Demography	Rural with small urban centres; Mainly white	Dense urban; Multicultural	Mixed urban/rural; Mainly white
Political	Liberal/Conservative	Labour/Conservative	Mainly Labour
Culture/history	Collaborative; History of localised provision/inclusion	Adversarial; Powerful/inflexible special school culture; Financial barriers	Move from 'top-down' to affiliation; history of inclusion; flexible special schools
Parents/voluntary sector	Inclusive emphasis	Status quo	Inclusive emphasis
View of national policy	Enabling	Ambiguous/unhelpful;	Negative/imposing
Change approach	Enabling/leading Strategic	Negotiating/persuading; 'change by stealth'	Responsive/serving; Middle managers want more strategic approach
Pace of change	Gradual	Gradual	Gradual
Support services	Ally; emphasis on cohesion	Ally; emphasis on cohesion (moving from 'business unit' model)	Serving schools; 'provider unit' model; Market-driven
Attitudes to delegation	Possibly cluster level	Need to re-establish central capacity	Already delegated; 'sold service' model

Firstly, there is a strong emphasis on the <u>background conditions</u> that support/inhibit the development of inclusion. These include:

(a) <u>demographic/geographical factors</u> (e.g. rurality, perceived pressures from particular populations)

(b) <u>cultural/historical factors</u> (e.g. quality of LA/school relationships and levels of school collaboration)

(c) <u>political factors</u> (e.g. local politician and senior officer views of the LA role)

(d) <u>parental/voluntary sector perspectives</u> (e.g. drive towards local community provision, lobby for more specialist options)

Secondly, national policy on inclusion at this time comes across as ambiguous. Some interviewees (such as the Head Teachers in Area C) see Government as imposing change on mainstream schools that is unwelcome and unreasonable. And yet, there are no clear consequences in terms of specific school accountabilities. Others (such as the primary Head and SEN Adviser in Area B) see national policy as giving little priority to inclusion (compared to attainment and standards) and limiting Local Authorities' ability

to challenge schools and progress the inclusion agenda. A third view is that national policy was having relatively little clear influence (positive or negative) on inclusion, leaving individual Authorities and schools to determine their own destiny at local level.

With variable background conditions and an ambiguous policy at national level, it is perhaps understandable that there is a gap between 'espoused theory' (Argyris & Schon op.cit) – a commitment to the local possibility of clear, overt, top-down policy-led change (overt; consensual; linear), and 'theory in practice' – the reality of the need for negotiation, persuasion, 'change by stealth'. All three Local Authorities in the sample tended towards a more 'gradualist' approach (and yet these had been identified because they either had a history of inclusion or were actively wanting to move in this direction).

The difference in background conditions between the three Authorities suggests that 'determination and leadership of key individuals' to achieve greater inclusion (Croll & Moses op.cit) may not be the sole influence on inclusive outcomes at Local Authority level. While this may be an important influence, it is clear that background conditions play a very significant mediating role.

The case studies suggest a difference in view of the contribution and effectiveness of support services in helping progress towards greater inclusion. Support services themselves (and some officers) tended to attribute positive change to their 'ground level' negotiations and practical implementation of 'policy/theory'. Fir them, the barriers to change were lack of policy/strategic support at senior LA level and ongoing negative attitudes in some schools. They saw themselves as making an active contribution to school development and 'inclusive culture', particularly where there was strong coherence/cohesion across teams and individuals.

Head Teachers and SENCOs tended to attribute positive change to in-school factors and see a more limited role for support services, working 'around the edges' and supporting the 'practical inclusion' of a smaller number of identified individuals with more significant/complex needs. Primary Heads and SENCOs appeared more inclined to perceive the need for an 'external catalyst' (and the contribution of support services to this role) than their secondary school colleagues. This difference may relate to the size and ethos of smaller primary schools where outsiders may have the opportunity for

more influence. There may also be something about the internal organisation and separate routines of subject Departments in secondary schools that make systems level influence harder.

In considering the focus for the next phase of the research (single LA case study), the intention was to look at some of these areas in more depth. For example,

1) in an Authority with an 'established' inclusive ethos working at LA and school level, how has this culture been developed ? What have been the key influences along the way ? And how has this culture been maintained ?

2) What have been the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' influences and the interaction between these two levels ?

3) What role have Local Authority support services played in this development and what is the evidence for their effectiveness ? How important has 'cohesion and coherence' (philosophy/working practices) across support teams and individuals been to achieving more inclusive outcomes ?

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS (3): IN-DEPTH SINGLE CASE STUDY:

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the findings of the single case-study. The first part of the chapter (sections 6.2 to 6.3) gives a historical account of the development of inclusion in the Authority, from the perspectives of the different protagonists. The second part (6.4 to 6.5) reports respondents' view on progress and outcomes, threats and maintaining factors. Their perspectives on the generalisability of the Borough's experience are given in section 6.6. The final section then provides an overview of the case study findings.

6.2 The early development of inclusion: political and professional stories:

The development of inclusion in this Authority tends to follow two different 'stories' that interweave and cross over at different points. The 'political story' (which is also told by some professionals) sees change as substantially led by Council members, with its origins in 'bottom-up' community action from a small group of parents. Local Authority officers and professionals play a lesser role, initially acting as a barrier to change, and then needing to adapt and conform to political imperatives, with little opportunity for active engagement and debate. The 'professional story' paints a slightly different picture, with the Authority already 'primed' to develop inclusive practice through the training and support provided 'on the ground' by specialist services and, in some cases, strong personal commitment to move in this direction. Within this story, the political agenda is seen as undervaluing professional contributions, and interpreting any presentation of legitimate practical issues as a sign of dissidence/resistance to the direction the Council was seeking to achieve.

6.2.1 The political story:

When asked about the main factor that had led to the development of inclusion in the Authority, one officer (who was a teacher trade union representative at the time) replied,

> *'I have absolutely no doubt whatsoever. In the early days, it wasn't educationalists, it wasn't teachers, as I was at that time, it wasn't an impetus from a pedagogic/ theoretical point of view. It was a human rights push from parents'.*

> *'It was really quite a small group of parents, parents of children with statements (and at that time, they were quite new things) and parents saying 'no, my child is not going to a segregated special school, my child is going to take up their right to a mainstream school'*

However, the push from parents did not stop there.

> '………A lot of Boroughs had parents who were vociferous, but the group of parents….. had the good sense to take political power – they stood for election, they gained office on Education Committee and others….and key roles on those Committees. So it wasn't just assertive parents – it was assertive parents who had a certain tactic, that they followed through to its fruition. And they forced the issue and they forced the changes……and they made use of that institution, the LEA, to push forward their policy.'   (Inclusion Development Officer)

The 'older parents' interviewed, who had been members of this group, offered some further background to their action. One of the group recalled how things moved from 'personal' to 'political':

> 'I think it happened when we were at your house – I don't know whether it was the first group meeting we came to – certainly in the early days – there were quite a lot of people there – (names several) …..I remember…I said 'Doctor B. came round and was talking about special – and you said 'oh, but it's not like that any more: there's a new Education Act, and our children will be able to go to mainstream'. And everybody was really excited. And I remember T. making a big speech about humanity and rights and all that stuff. And I think we kind of made a collective decision that our kids would go to mainstream whatever happened. And it was like a strength thing…. we realised there were other people around as well, and it was really supportive…. It wasn't one family in isolation, it was a collective decision we made.

This theme of 'collective strength' was picked up by another member of the group.

> 'the group was actually made up of different people, with different backgrounds and different attitudes, but we had one common goal, which was integration, and also it was the best for our children…….everyone on that group used their strength in some way or another'.

As well as having a growing awareness of their collective strength, the group of parents realised that they would have a more substantial influence if they gained political power.

> 'I think from there, I don't know how it gelled, but we sort of realised that it wouldn't just be us wanting it, it had to have some sort of political pressure brought to bear to make changes'.

> 'And we lobbied the Education Committee, and C. was Chair and she was sympathetic – not interested in doing very much, but she said 'fine, ok, I support you'. And she set up a working party and we went on it – we were the parent reps on it'.

However, the working party proved to be frustrating for these parents[43]. This experience led to the group's decision (in the mid 1980s) to push for an 'integrated education' policy to be included in the local Labour Party manifesto and one of the group stood and was elected to the Borough Council, becoming part of the Education 'leadership team'. This parent proved to be very influential in securing support and priority for the policy. The current Cabinet Member for Education (who was Chair of Finance at the time) recalled:

> *'It was K. who actually drove it, with one or two others….she had the vision'.*

> *'I had no ideology on this, but it was our policy…it was my job to find the money'.*

> *'I became quite committed to it, but at first I didn't know much about it'*

> *'There was very little real determined opposition at member level – there was some'.*

A key means of getting the policy accepted (within a then predominantly Labour Council with some 'hard left' members) was the linking of integration of children with special educational needs to the 'human rights' agenda. Links were made to discrimination against other minority groups (and the 'anti-racism' agenda) and the need to combat 'segregation' in all areas of life. As the senior Education Officer commented (who then had responsibility within the Authority for SEN),

> *'by tacking it on to the equal opportunities agenda, it silenced all the Labour councillors who would otherwise have opposed it'.*

While one member of the parent group was exerting an influence at Council level, others took opportunities to influence opinion elsewhere. This was partly through appointment to other roles (eg school governor),

> *'so you picked things up….when you knew something was coming along'*

and attending meetings on a more ad hoc basis….

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[43] more details are described in the parents' own written account

> *'if there was a meeting, we went to it – even if it was someone who said something and we could challenge it'.*

At the same time, members of the group were having an early influence on some professionals.

> *'From very early on, there was an additional core of people – professionals – who were convinced. And that came in very early…'*

Some of these contacts were serendipitous:

> *'It proved very early on, with enough key individuals around, we could turn people round on the spot – who we didn't realise in fact at the time were key…..somebody like D. (now Head of Learning Support) who'd been a special school teacher, who we just happened to know because I taught her the piano for a bit, when our daughter was a tiny baby…..And there were certain people you could do that with…..Once you pointed it out to them (the links with human rights agenda), they didn't take any convincing…..Because of the make-up of the Borough, they were already familiar with those sorts of arguments….'*

> *'The senior teacher in the Union in the Borough was against it, and then, overnight, his best friend had a Down's child, and so, overnight, his philosophy completely changed'* *'Yeah, we were very lucky…these opportunities we grasped'*

> *'D. was the senior NUT officer and that really helped, and F. (who's the guy you're talking about, they were actually the NUT in the Borough, and they managed to get in early on policy, protocol and agreement, so that was really helpful……'*

Support was also drawn in from other quarters, such as the voluntary sector

> *'Handicapped Childline – they were a pressure group that was pressing for access…you know, you couldn't get into your Town Hall, because there steps. And they put ramps in and they fought on all those sorts of issues. And they backed us as well..'*

and local University academics

> *'people tried to use us, like…., but actually we got more out of them'*

and trainee educational psychologists

> *'we were rehearsing with people who were going to be educational psychologists what we were going to say to schools'.*

On balance, however, the 'political story' tells a tale of having to overcome the resistance of the 'establishment' and combat 'professional power' by obtaining influence through other channels.

Individual parents within the group had experienced negative expectations from professionals (officers within Education, educational psychologists, Health) about the prospects of mainstream placement. One parent recounted:

> *'When I went to the clinic to see the paediatrician and the educational psychologist, they started to laugh ! C. was still crawling around really at this point – she was playing with the waste bin under the table. And I said 'this is what I want – I want her to go to the nursery that's attached to the Catholic school, then I want her to go into the Catholic school…'. And they started to laugh, you know, 'you should go and see this special school'. And I said, 'well, I'm quite happy to go and <u>see</u> it, but I've no intention of sending her there'. And they just laughed. So I said, 'if you're not going to give her a statement for the nursery to the mainstream school, I'm sorry, I'll just educate her at home'.*
>
> *I gathered her up and put her under my arm and said, 'come on, C., we're moving on' – you know….and they just sat there and looked at me, and I said 'you can write to me again when you're ready to give the statement for the mainstream school'. So, I did get another letter eventually….they had changed a bit, actually.'*

Another added,

> *'….and when those professionals kept saying 'oh, no, it will never work'*

Professionals were seen as offering incentives for parents to follow the (more traditional) special school route:

> *'they got you into special school by offering speech therapy at 6 months'*
>
> *'they said 'we'll lay on transport for you'*

In pursuing mainstream placements for their own children, the parents had learned to bypass these professionals and approach schools direct.

> *'I think what we all did, you know, after various degrees of research, was took that front, didn't we? 'We want them to go to the local school' and so we approached our local school as if that was the norm, didn't we? And I think that way worked really well – rather than going through the bureaucracy'*

> *'I mean we just approached the head teacher of the nursery up here, and I think you probably did the same. And we said 'we've got this child: there are issues, we know, like changing, but we want them to come here'. And that was much better than thinking we'd got to go through the officer and get permission'.*

At a broader political level, the group had drawn on 'informational power' through attending sessions provided by the local University on the new SEN legislation (1981 Education Act). One parent reported that the group found themselves to be more knowledgeable about this, at the time, than most of the 'local professional establishment'. However, the Act turned out to be less conclusive than expected in promoting their right to mainstream placements:

> *'some meeting we had at the Church Hall….we had a whole group of parents….and we thought, with the Act coming in, it would be a walkover – you know, 'this is the law – our kids can go cos' we want them to go'. And then somebody was saying 'ah, but it all depends on resources'…. 'only if the resources are there'. Well, it's not resources, it's the attitude of the teachers'.*

The combination of informational power, personal beliefs and persuasion were not sufficient to significantly alter the establishment view. One parent who was a representative on the integration working party in the post 1981 period, reported:

> *'That working party was hell, wasn't it – it met for 18 months'.*

Two of the parents, in their published account of the development of inclusion in their Auuthority, report that it was not possible for the working party to arrive at a consensus. So two different reports were produced. Report A. was signed by two Councillors, one parent, and 4 teachers (3 of whom worked in special schools). This concluded:

> *'Any alterations to the present situation should represent improvements or have clear potential for the improvement of educational arrangements for all pupils, including those at present attending mainstream schools. We are anxious that integration when it takes place should be of educational worth. Poorly conceptualised and implemented integration is more harmful than no integration at all.'*

The report went on to outline some possibilities for the development of integration, which, in the view of its authors, needed to focus on opportunities for pupils with 'less serious' special educational needs, and on children of nursery/pre-nursery age. Report B. (signed by 4 parents and supported by one Councillor) was more radical:

'Integration means the education of all pupils, handicapped and non-handicapped, together, in their neighbourhood school. We assume it to be obvious that integration must be a process, and not something that can happen overnight, without careful planning. This does not mean, however, that the process cannot begin now. We advise the Council to instruct its officers to take steps immediately towards this aim, and recommend that the process should be well on its way within 5 years'.

The report went on to outline the benefits to both pupils with 'complex and severe' needs and 'the other' children in the Borough that would derive from them being educated together.

The group of parents who produced the latter report went on to push for its key messages to be included in the 1986 local Labour Party manifesto.

6.2.2   The professional story:

The 'professional story' (presented particularly by the Senior Education Officer (who had oversight of SEN at the time) and the Principal Educational Psychologist (who arrived at a later stage)) accepts the role played by parents and politicians but ascribes a more positive value to professional contributions and concerns. In the view of the Senior Education Officer, there were a number of 'predisposing factors' that pre-dated parental/political involvement and enabled successful change to occur.

'The key factor initially was that we had a very effective adviser for SEN…who worked here for a number of years, who worked very well to prepare some quite gifted teachers – special school teachers – he put them on courses – so that, when we opened the resourced provision, as we called it (special units in mainstream schools), they had the skills and the know-how to make a success of it – and, without that sort of professional input and professional preparation, all the rhetoric and political speechifying wouldn't have led to the good results'

'So you had to see these two things together. I don't think, politically, we got a great deal of credit for that here. I think actually that far more of it was to do with that sort of professional preparation than otherwise'.

And the Principal Educational Psychologist added:

'Another factor that was important: there was very strong, good, effective practice in (the Borough) *– the attitudes were already there, committed to: people were already working towards children reintegrating from special schools'.*

'That was from the grassroots. That was from teachers; it was particularly from the Preschool Home Visiting Service. By and large, there were a lot of very

skilled, experienced people – very, very supportive of a move to integration. So you had highly skilled people already in place, doing good ad hoc casework. So, when it came to a whole policy shift, you had an army of people out there who weren't resistant'.

Within this story, the Local Authority's support services for SEN were seen as a key resource for making the new policy work in practice. According to the Senior Education Officer,

> *'The support service was absolutely essential……partly because of the lack of skills (in mainstream schools), but it wasn't just skills, it was also a question of attitudes as well….They were role models; they did carry people along with them, partly because many of them were so good'.*

A number of these support teachers moved from special schools:

> *'There were a number of teachers in those schools who either did at the time, or shortly afterwards, have a considerable commitment to integration. They also had a capacity to teach across the age boundary (primary and secondary), which was very good when you were running support services…'*

From the perspective of some of the professionals interviewed, the development of a strong Council member position on inclusion had a number of benefits:

> *'The member push for it was important because, by linking it to equal opportunities, it sort of…made it a higher level issue….gave it a status it wouldn't have otherwise had.'* (Senior Education Officer – who goes on to say this was particularly important in safeguarding additional resources).

> *'I think the members' framework was very, very important, because it set a kind of…it just put a ring around it…you know, 'the members like to have this, the members want this'. So that was the critical factor, it seemed to me'*
> (Head of Behaviour Support – relatively recently appointed).

However, for some, the more radical (political/parental) agenda had its 'downsides'. These were linked particularly to the policy of 'desegregation'. The Senior Education Officer commented:

> *'From 1986, the agenda became more ideological. It was about closing all special schools, which were seen to be agents of discrimination, and progressing as much mainstream integration as possible'.*

In the Senior Officer's view, this policy was being pushed by a relatively small number of (powerful) members, and he had concerns that it was not sustainable:

> *'My main fear at the time was a legitimate fear – we were in a situation where there was a commitment to do it, on the part of a small group of politically active people in the Borough, but there wasn't very widespread support for it. And frankly the fear was that the resources were not adequate to do the job'.*

Both the Senior Officer and the Principal Educational Psychologist were also concerned that members underestimated the need for specialist skills to support the implementation of the policy. The Principal Psychologist explained as follows:

> *'I think the rationale, the logic was that 'what holds up integration (as it was then, not inclusion) is the presence of special schools and places available, at high cost'. The strategy was that, if you close that and don't make it available, you actually require the mainstream schools to make provision. And I think that was also combined with a belief system that, if you close the special schools, that would happen – you don't need a great deal of expertise. I think that was a mistake – to this day'*

> *'I think the original strategy believed that you didn't need a great deal of skill and expertise – that, when you were faced with a child, perhaps with severe physical difficulties, in your class, you can't do anything but adapt and learn as you go along. And it's not rocket science, you just get it done… whereas I actually think that you build the confidence of schools and staff if there is training and recognition that some expertise is necessary'.*

> *'But this wasn't the view of the political lead'.*

In his view, attitudes were not the whole story: there was also a need for skills and resources, and a proper balance between these, for meaningful inclusion to be progressed successfully.

For some professionals, the 'mood hardened', once the particular group of members 'gained power'. In the earlier stages,

> *'There had been a period of debate – a fairly fierce debate; but that debate, I think, served a very important function – it appeared to be open; that was a period when people weren't fearful, when the Council hadn't yet made its policy up'* (Principal Educational Psychologist).

This contrasted with the subsequent approach:

> *'The Chair of Education met Marsha Forrest and Jack Pearpoint* (Canadian inclusionists) *and they then came over and consulted with us…and overnight the language changed from 'integration'….and there was never a debate, never a discussion. And, in a sense, that confused people'*

> *'There wasn't tolerance for constructive criticism. I can remember Forrest and Pearpoint saying 'either commit in or else go elsewhere'....you know 'we don't need you here if you're not going to be committed'. And I think that actually held. So it stifled any meaningful debate…'* (Principal Educational Psychologist)

The Senior Education Officer added:

> *'Professionally, it made it much harder because people were antagonised by that approach and felt that, since you'd made your mind up anyway about what you were going to do, any form of consultation was a bit of a sham. And there was some truth in that....I mean, we never acknowledged we had a policy to close all special schools. There may have been rhetorical statements but, professionally, that was always in the future'.*

> *'The difficulty was that members weren't always very good at perceiving the difference between, say, the people who were genuinely trying to make as much progress as possible for integration but were sounding warning notes – any warning note was perceived as a source of the problem....they sometimes perceived, you know, 'hold on, we need to take this a bit more slowly, these children are very vulnerable, we can't get it wrong, we need to be supporting them' – they tended, some perhaps saw that as people being negative'.*

Some officer concerns were presented as ethical, not just practical issues. There was a feeling that children's needs could be compromised by the pursuit of a political ideology. The Senior Education Officer referred to a particular issue that had arisen when special school funding had to be cut because of a serious and unexpected budget problem:

> *'I think we starved our special schools of resources, not only to facilitate this, but partly because there was a political....there was a political feeling that we actually ought to make special schools less attractive so that parents would want to stop sending their children there.....which I....well, I don't need to tell you how I must have felt about that !'*

6.2.3 'Political' and 'parental' stories: reconciling the differences:

Both stories recognise the significant part played in the early development of inclusion in the Borough by a small but well-organised group of parents, who gained formal and informal political power. In some ways, the two stories diverge according to the two broad philosophies presented in the two working party reports referred to above. The 'political' story focuses on achieving 'rights' for individuals and broader populations. The 'professional' story focuses more on 'meeting children's needs' (as assessed professionally and requiring specific resources and skills).

There was some evidence that, whatever training and development had already been put in place for professionals, the overall 'system' was working from a fairly low baseline. The Authority's Inclusion Support Officer, who worked in the Borough throughout the process of change, commented about the traditional establishment as follows:

> *'I think it (the parental/political 'push') wrong-footed many of us in some senses because, in the past, there had been a kind of medical or educational model that had quite neat answers for why as child was doing this or was in such and such a place'*

This corresponds with the 'older parents' experience of individual professionals, who typically saw special school provision as offering a direct match to particular categories of need.

At Council level, the Senior Education Officer reported a relatively inactive 'status quo':

> *'....the Council at the time....was fairly backward in this respect (it lavished charitable works on their schools !)'*

which contrasted with

> *'....a new atmosphere in the air, among people who wanted to promote integration'*

There were also quality issues in relation to existing special school provision. One was located in a very run-down environment:

> *'It was cold. It was horrible; it was so depressing going across and you thought 'are things really so bad that you have to be bussed out to this very isolated place...?'* (member of older parents' group)

Another parent recalled visiting a special school for moderate learning difficulties:

> *'I asked them 'when did they teach them to read?' And they looked at me and said 'when they show they're ready'! ....Well, my boy, G., you're never going to teach him if you wait to show he's ready. And that was 0/10 for that one....'*

One of the group's children had initially been placed in an SLD school and her fight to withdraw him and place him in mainstream became a 'cause celebre' for the parents' group. One of the parents had also visited the school:

> *'I think what excited me was C's experience…her boy went to special school and he actually <u>regressed</u>. And I thought, 'I'm not going to have that' – you know, it really stiffened my back'*

The Senior Education Officer described the early ('pre-political') period in relatively conservative terms:

> *'We really started, you see, in January 1984 and we made quite a lot of progress. But it was rather more limited in so far as what we sought to do initially (I must say very much on my advice) was to make progress in certain areas where 'functional integration' was particularly conceivable….and then, after a period of time, we would see whether things could go further. So one looked naturally at things like children with moderate learning difficulties, children who were physically disabled or had sensory handicap where you thought, you know, their special school curriculum might be somewhat restricted….'*

> *'We didn't take the sort of policy decisions to close…special schools. That was….well, from <u>my</u> point of view, that was something that was further down the line – and I didn't particularly want to get into that, at the time'.*

Although there was clearly some discomfort with the way that politicians acted in seeking to achieve their goals, there was also quite a strong view from a range of professionals that change might not have been nearly so significant if it had been 'professionally-led'. This was particularly the case from the perspective of the Head of Learning Support and the Inclusion Development Officer, who were both working in the Borough in these 'early days'. The latter referred to some of the 'agonies' experienced at these early stages:

> *'...one of the things that I disagreed with at the time'*

but reflected:

> *'I suspect that, at that time, if we had not had the push from those parents, that people like me (you know – liberal, wishy-washy people!) would not have grasped the nettle ……would not have made those fundamental changes'.*

The Head of Learning Support added:

> *'I know that it* (the member push) *has been the driving force – otherwise* (for professionals) *the situation is never quite right, you have 'inadequate resources', you have 'inadequate physical access', ' training hasn't been delivered' to the extent that some colleagues would feel necessary. And,*

although it doesn't mean that these aspects aren't significant (we have always talked about 'resources', 'training needs') – the <u>attitude</u> is the most important thing. (similar point made by Head of HI Team)

And the Senior Education Officer in retrospect admitted:

'....although it was a fairly risky policy (of integrating)…I think we have achieved much more than I would have expected – and faster – than if we'd followed the sort of incremental route that I would professionally have been more comfortable with when I first came….'.

6.3 Policy to practice:

6.3.1 The policy imperative

By contrast to some broader policy statements issued by some other Local Authorities, this Borough's policy on 'integration' had an imperative force. Both senior officers and support team managers viewed it as setting out clear expectations that Local Authority employees (and schools) were expected to follow:

' if it is a Council decision and we are an 'inclusive Borough', you know you are expected to work in an inclusive style and to own the philosophy of inclusion'.
(Head of Learning Support)

'I mean, if members tell you, after discussion, that 'this is what we want you to do', well then you enter into it, and do it..' (Senior Education Officer)

'there was an authoritative political lead' (Principal Educational Psychologist)

The Senior Education Officer saw this 'force' as particularly compelling:

'we were put under tremendous political pressure to deliver….'

'there was a sort of 'fear culture' here….'

The politicians themselves presented this more positively, as part of a broader push to raise expectations:

'It was a member-led decision. It was taken in the context of a lot of other member-led decisions as well, I mean, the closing of the school 6th forms and the opening of the 6th form college; the amalgamation of infant and junior departments on the same site; a determination to face schools up to raising standards when they were the worst-performing in the country – by far; a determination to do something about truancy and a determination to do something about the curriculum as well…' (Cabinet Member for Education)

The policy was also led by individual Councillors for whom inclusion was a strong personal priority[44]:

> *'In the early days, there was such a strong movement to enable children to be educated together, and I know that certain members would have wanted there to be no special schools, so that it would be absolutely clear to everybody in education that this was how it was meant to be..'*   (Head of Learning Support)

With regard to inclusion, the main political emphasis at this stage was on location: desegregation and mainstreaming. Resourcing and support needed to be put in place to ensure that children (including those with significant needs) could attend their local mainstream school; and special school provision needed to be progressively dismantled.

6.3.2 Planning

While the broad policy directions were relatively clear, the process for moving forward, at least initially, was not articulated in any detail. In the interview analysis, most references within the 'planning' category were coded as either 'haphazard' or 'opportunistic'. As the current Cabinet Member for Education (then Chair of Finance) commented:

> *'What then happened was that there was a determination to integrate – we didn't have a timescale and we didn't even seem to have a plan – it was very….odd!'*
>
> *'We did eventually have more of a plan over the years, but I think at first we just started to operate it on a kind of policy that we wanted to do, and then certain events, certain things happened. For instance, the building where the children who had speech difficulty….was condemned – so we had to do something about that. Another school, where the secondary behaviour children….well, it put two Heads in hospital, I think, and it became virtually ungovernable, so we had to do something about that. Then another special school, for physically handicapped, burnt down in the middle of the night. And we had to do something about that !'*
>
> *'So, in some ways, the first three moves towards the integration of children with special educational needs were a response to events. We then saw the opportunity of using events to our ends…. So, the philosophy was there. I think how we went from where we were, to where we are now, the plans came later, and then drove it'.*

The Cabinet Member's portrayal of the early stages of policy implementation is generally consistent with the parents' written account[45]. Their 'time chart' (see Table 12

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[44] The Chair of Education at this stage was one of the 'old parents' group

below) indicates that more specific development planning started at the end of the 1980s, a couple of years after the 1986 policy declaration, as a response to increasing concerns from parents of children in special schools about the prospects of further closures.

Table 12:   Developing Inclusion in the single case-study Authority: Time Chart (adapted from parents' written account)

1983	Council accepts principle of 'integration' and establishes working party to develop a policy
1984	Preschool service established to support children into mainstream nurseries from Portage
1984	Integration working party unable to agree and produces two reports
1986	Council agrees first Integration policy
1987	New structure for supporting integration established (support services; steering group)
1987	Education Committee agrees closure of secondary EBD school
1988	Closure ratified by Secretary of State; new secondary Behaviour Support service established to work alongside support service for Learning
1988	Education Committee agrees closure of secondary section of one of two schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (and other needs)
1989	Education Committee approves Integration Development Plan; NFER review signals need for support services to work at 'whole-school' level (as well as supporting individual pupils)
1991	After protracted negotiations/consultation, first MLD school closure is agreed by Secretary of State ('in its entirety'). Resources relocated to the Learning Support Service and a small number of 'resourced' mainstream schools
1991	Education Committee agrees the closure of school for the deaf
1992	Closure ratified by Secretary of State; alternative provision made in mainstream schools (local + resourced provision); bilingual service (BSL) established
1992	Education Committee agrees closure of second MLD school
1992	Policy change from 'Integration' to 'Inclusive Education'; Appointment of new Director of Education, with commitment to inclusion
1992	Primary EBD school no longer taking full-time pupils (now primary Behaviour Support Service and part-time placements)
1992	Fire at school for physical disabilities/medical conditions: majority of primary pupils transfer to mainstream, followed by secondary (1993/4)
1994	Closures of second MLD school and school for physical disabilities finally ratified by Secretary of State
1995	Provision for children with significant visual impairment developed within Borough, as an alternative to out of Authority placement

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[45] although the closure of the school for children with physical disabilities/medical conditions happened in the second phase (later than he recalls), and closure was already being considered before the fire occurred.

1995	Review of Inclusive Education recommends amalgamation of two remaining schools for severe/profound learning difficulties, increase in mainstream placements for pupils with this level of need, and maintenance of primary EBD school as a more flexible support provision
1999	Secretary of State agrees closure of one of two SLD schools
1999	Positive feedback to Borough from Ofsted/DfEE regarding (a) 'successful inclusion policy' and (b) significant improvements in GCSE results over 4 year period: reinforcement of link between inclusion and attainment
2000	Review of Borough's approach to mainstream SEN resourcing leads to significant delegation of SEN support service funding and retention of smaller 'core teams', linked to low incidence/more complex needs and school development/advisory/training functions
2002	Appointment of new Director; comprehensive external review reaffirms existing policy directions

6.3.3   Opposition and barriers

It is clear that there was considerable opposition to the planned closures 'on the ground', particularly from parents of children in special schools and special school staff, which endured through to the final closure of the school for physical difficulties and the second MLD school in the mid 1990s. By that time, the Council had moved from an expectation that all pupils would be educated in their own local mainstream schools to an acceptance that some form of 'resourced provision' would be necessary – if only as an intermediate step to 'full inclusion'.

As the current Cabinet Member recalled,

> *'It was not always done without considerable difficulty. It was interesting when I became Chair of Education in 94, I believe 3 special schools closed in one night, and not a single person in the public gallery – at the end of a process. Whereas, at the beginning, it used to be…quite firm…..'*

> *'and, of course, we had a lot of opposition. At first, we got parental opposition who were convinced their children were going to be bullied. On other occasions, there was staff opposition, even from the staff within the special schools whose expertise was going to be used, but who had to get used to the fact that they would not be working in one particular institution…There was legal action taken too – it went to the courts at least twice. And there were also some great fears from some of the receiving schools.'*

The Principal Educational Psychologist reported:

> *'an enormous amount of officer time, including my own time, was used in the process of closing the schools….because there was strong opposition from parents, and some of the staff from the schools, and governors. The negotiations*

and process for closing those schools took much longer than expected…all of those school closures were pretty painful…'

Although there was *'very little real determined opposition at member level'*, there was some. One senior Councillor (not on the Education Committee) *'was one of those who led the court case – she was Chair of Governors* (of one of the special schools earmarked for closure[46])'.

It is unclear how far opposition extended across the broader community of teachers and schools. However, there were some reported anxieties about developments at Trade Union level:

> *'I must say that, at that time* (late 1980s)*, I think, from the Union point of view, we were quite keen to see what safeguards would be put in place, and I think it would be fair to say we were a bit defensive about any kind of change that might be occurring'.* (Inclusion Development Officer: who had been Trade Union rep on the working party)

And subsequently, there were fears from mainstream schools that the volume of children being 'integrated' would put an unreasonable pressure on them:

> *'There was the 'floodgates' analogy that was given to us on several occasions….. 'we're just not going to be able to cope'.*

Opposition was strong enough at one stage for the current Cabinet Member, who was a senior member of the Labour Group, to feel that the integration policy might be retracted:

> *'I remember on one particular occasion, a woman came to the Group saying how terrible it was going to be for her child (she was a woman who is now an advocate of inclusion), and the moment she spoke, I thought someone was going to move 'we abandon our policies now….next business'.*

In the event, the policy survived. However, this period marked a move from a more purist emphasis on desegregation (the right and value of children with any level of difficulty to attend their local mainstream school and be part of their local peer group community) to a more 'functional' view of integration (children being placed in specific mainstream schools with 'resourced provision' that was 'high quality' and more visibly able to meet particular individual needs.

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[46] There was particular controversy about the closure of the second MLD school, where there was reported to be significant opposition from the Head Teacher and staff.

6.3.4　Resourced provision – short-term solution or long-term compromise ?

The Principal Educational Psychologist was in no doubt that this change in emphasis was due to the arrival of the new Director of Education:

> *'What happened was that there was an immediate change in strategy. R. (the new Director) recognised that a lot of officer time, a lot of energy was being used up in the closure process. And so he shifted the strategy to one of finding alternatives – so that was an option for parents'*

> *'There were some resourced places already but what he did was he extended them'*

> *'And the strategy was 'develop high quality inclusive resourced provision and then parents given the choice between special school and this – if we produce quality, then they'll not want the option of special school…and they can become rationalised''*

From the Members' point of view, the development of resourced provision was seen as a short-term solution to overcoming local objections, and also a necessary step to help achieve DfEE approval for the closures:

> *'What the DfES said was 'if you don't have an alternative set-up, then you're not going to close the school'* (Principal Educational Psychologist)

> *'When we closed our MLD schools, we were confronted with a requirement from the DfES to have resourced provision'* (Senior Education Officer)

However, although a number of resourced provisions (particularly for MLD and speech & language difficulties) were subsequently phased out, a number still remain:

> *'I think that, in the original plan……it was envisaged that there would be no special schools and no resourced provision – all children's needs would be met within local mainstream school. I think they realised that this was perhaps a step too far. So the resourced provision was an intermediate step. But it's become now almost like the consolidated approach. And that's shifted – so as not to 'rock the boat''* (Principal Educational Psychologist)

While alternative provision for pupils from MLD schools included both resourced school and local mainstream options, there appeared to be a more direct transfer of pupils with other types of difficulty, from special school to mainstream resourced provision. For example, for pupils from the school for the deaf:

'The secondary were offered H. (secondary resourced provision for hearing-impaired)....they stayed as class groups really'

' the nursery……..were mainly offered E. (primary resourced provision)'
(Head of Hearing Impaired Support Team)

From this service manager's perspective, this reflected a need for pupils with more complex and specialist needs to be educated together, in resourced provision that offered 'economies of scale' and a 'signing environment/peer group'.

'I think people thought long and hard about it. And perhaps ideally from the officers' viewpoint, to introduce the policy, it would be in every school. But the deaf need a community to have a conversation……..Though it might seem very idealistic, that it's the right thing for inclusion that you go to your local school, for your mum and dad, it perhaps isn't the best thing for you all the time'
(Head of Hearing Impaired Support Team)

In practice, in this case, there appeared to be some attempt to balance competing considerations: the professional view (that placements should be determined by professionally assessed needs), parental choice (which partly related to previous provision experience) and the political principle of child entitlement to a supported placement in a local mainstream school.

6.3.5 Pace of change

Even so, the pace of the transition from special school to alternative options was seen by some to be problematic:

'It was very much done in haste….for example, with the alternative provision for the deaf, one of the failures of that process was not adequate consultation – we live with that legacy today. The deaf community are still mistrustful of the Authority and actually sometimes go out of their way to persuade parents of the option of a special school for deaf children. Because, I think, things were done without that consideration – and things were done pretty swiftly – there were some mistakes'

'I think there needed to be more preparation and planning. But there was a belief that, if you don't do things quickly, there are forces that delay – and that actually waters down the commitment'   (Principal Educational Psychologist)

The latter view was endorsed by the Head of the Hearing Impaired Support Team:

'I think, if you say you're going to do it on a continuum, when people are ready, you're never going to be ready. I think you do have to sometimes just do it and

have the resources and funding there. Otherwise, there's always a reason why it's not quite right yet'.

Generally, while the primary political objective of 'desegregation' remained, any delay was seen by some Members as a 'necessary evil' that might be needed strategically to manage any local opposition and achieve DfEE ratification of closure proposals.

It was increasingly recognised however that parents and schools might need greater support and reassurance that mainstream placements were appropriate and viable, particularly for children with more complex needs.

6.3.6   Schools, support services and parents : experience 'at the ground level':

6.3.6.1 School attitudes:

At the point when the Authority's integration policy was first introduced, there was varying level of commitment from schools. From the 'older' parents' point of view, the attitude of staff in schools, and in particular the head teacher or deputy, was key.

> *'The Headmistress (*who had refused admission) *left…and we had a new headmaster and he took P. on'*

At a more general level, there was acceptance of the overall philosophy among staff who understood the links to the equalities agenda and were committed to this. As the Senior Officer explained:

> *'Integration or inclusive education was, for some people, the comprehensive principle 'writ large'. And that was a driving force for a lot of teachers.'*

However, more broadly, there was some scepticism about how the policy would work in practice.

> *'I think the stock phrase was 'well, it's alright in theory but…..''*

There was varying commitment from teachers in the special school sector, with some Heads fighting closure, and some staff actively seeking to support the mainstreaming agenda.

The primary Head interviewed emphasised the importance of leadership, beliefs and commitment across the staff group:

> *'Let's be clear. I think it's very important for us to be able to say 'we believe we are an inclusive school and try really hard to be an inclusive school'. And…I would say that everybody here actually believes in it – and that's really important. And it's not easy. So are we? All I can say is that I <u>believe</u> we are and try very hard to be'*

She traced this commitment back to her initial experience of having a child with Down's syndrome in her school (the daughter of one of the 'older parents'):

> *'I've been like this since J..* (older parent) *has been on the scene. His eldest daughter had Down's syndrome and….pre-the big debate on inclusion, he came to me as a parent – because at that time children in this Borough went to special schools. And he said to me 'M., I don't want my daughter to go there'….and I'd never experienced that before. But what I was thinking about was the huge commitment of the parent and how he would support. And I thought 'I have no right to say 'no'' – I've got to work with this because of his daughter.'*
>
> *I would say that was the starting point for the school…and it was pre- support. And I think we've got a lot to be grateful for, for meeting people like that, because I think he was the starting point for me to think 'this is absolutely right – these children deserve to be part of mainstream and be accepted.'*

Successful experience of integrating individual children had a significant on the confidence of mainstream staff, as was parents' own commitment to secure this:

> *'I got her into the nursery myself…..I stayed with her for about a month, maybe two, until they could cope with her and knew what she was about'.*
>
> *'When I went down to the nursery to put her name down, she said 'oh, I've been expecting you since I read in the paper about mainstream going on and everything – and that's fine, it's just the Education Department aren't sure it's the right thing. You have to stay on site with her'. And I said 'well, I'll stay on site but I'll sit in the staffroom and if you need me, I'll come out'. At the end of the month, they said 'oh, don't bother coming back because it was obvious she was* (OK)*'.*
>
> *'We had to go in* (to the secondary school)*, …and I had to go to the school library, and every single teacher was sitting around. And I had to sit there…and I had to say what I expected them to do for L. - because it was new – and they were all worried about what I would expect and how she would react. And I thought I was going to have trouble with the Maths teacher, English and French teachers: but they were brilliant – the only ones I had trouble with were PE, Music and Art….but they grew, I mean they were really good….'*

From the school perspective, the way in which individual parents communicated with them in the early days was important. It was easier if relationships had already been established through the attendance of older siblings. On parent commented:

> *'I think a lot to do with it was that my boys had been through the nursery school, so you got to know the staff, so I didn't feel intimidated to go in and ask; and the same thing when we laid foundations with the primary school. On parents' night, we button-holed the Head and said 'this is L.: she's coming here; can you put her name down ?' She almost fainted, but……'*

The primary Head who had admitted C's daughter (see above) reported:

> *'We had discussions. He did it very well. I think what he did was to get the thinking started – a lot of discussion, so it wasn't done overnight. But I had to be sure that I wasn't going to take his daughter into school and she was just <u>coping</u>, but that she was actually going to benefit'*

At a broader level, she also reflected on her cumulative experience:

> *'I think it's about confidence too…….having children as part of your school and seeing this huge development is probably the most convincing thing…'*

The two parents who produced a written account of the development of inclusion in the Borough also refer to other factors, such as the availability of a Parent Support Network/Parents' Centre to enable parents to discuss any concerns, and the priority given to training for schools on SEN, disability and inclusion issues.

6.3.6.2 Support service contributions

There is less evidence from their account of the part played by support services in facilitating and supporting change[47]. References to these services in the interviews tended to fall within the 'enabling' vs 'barrier' categories (see Table 13 below). There were few apparent barriers (in contrast to schools) in terms of 'beliefs' or 'engagement', and a higher number of references overall in the 'enabling' category[48]. Overall, the code 'support services activities' had the third highest number of references (27) within the 'enabling factors' category (after 'parents' and 'Council members'. Interestingly, there tended to be a higher number of references to support service contributions within the interviews with support service managers/officers than with politicians/the 'older

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[47] They tend to focus on the shift of special school staff to a mainstream support role.
[48] Care is needed in interpretation here as some references in text were multiply coded. They also included generalised statements/speculations about influences, as well as references to factors that were seen to have impinged more directly on the situation in the Borough.

parents' group. This may link to the 'professional' vs 'political stories' described earlier in this chapter.

Table 13: Number of references (all sources) coded within the categories of barriers, enabling and maintaining factors, for schools and support services

	Barriers	Enabling	Maintaining
Schools	66	72	102
Support services	25	97	78

The two education officers made the strongest reference to the importance of the support service role:

> *'I think we wouldn't have been able to move the inclusion agenda on if we hadn't had central support services. I mean, that is <u>definitely</u> the case'.*
> (Head of SEN)

> *'I think that the support service was absolutely essential – substantial support services were essential to begin with'*   (Senior Education Officer)

So, what role did the support services play ? In the early days, it is possible to differentiate between two 'styles' of activity. The first, attributed particularly to the Preschool SEN Support Service, can be described as 'advocacy':

> *'I think it's a bit like positive discrimination. And I can understand it. You know, because sometimes, you were battling for the child to be in the school…(and I think especially people in the preschool team would have said this – they had to battle to support the parents to get a child into the school – they were an advocate of that child; they would support that child and their family; that's where they thought their allegiance actually was)'*   (Head of SEN)

The other style was more pragmatic/conciliatory. 'Advocacy' is seen more in terms of 'commitment to influence' (and influence effectively):

> *'Certainly, early on… we <u>were</u> advocates…we had to do everything in our power in some ways to influence colleagues* (schools)*'*

> *'But in order to make sure that it happened in a successful way, we knew that we had to tread very carefully, and I guess in the early days we were, you know, working with 'kid gloves' and we were tiptoeing round'*

> *'Certainly, in secondary classes, we were sort of working on the peripheral kind of bases but we tried very much to work hand in hand with subject teachers. But often it was a 'softly softly approach that won over the colleagues and then*

planning and working together and taking dual responsibility for this. So it was
very much proving that we were real teachers but we had the additional
knowledge and understanding of children's needs - but also that we could
practically make it happen.'   (Head of Learning Support)

Within the Learning Support Service, the emphasis was on '*demonstrating and*
modelling good practice'. This was not at the expense of '*securing individual rights and*
entitlements', but:

> *'in order to include them, we would be merging their individual rights and needs*
> *with curriculum access and planning. And, you know, in the early days of*
> *looking at differentiation……and supporting the curriculum, we knew that our*
> *role had to be one of very good practitioners showing a high level of*
> *understanding – that required a good knowledge of needs because we were*
> *working with such a diverse range of young people'* (Head of Learning Support)

There were times when the services needed to act more as individual advocates, for
example when a placement had broken down.

> *'We knew that you would not be able to force the hand of certain head teachers*
> *and, even working directly with teachers, to include certain children. Certainly,*
> *aspects of negotiations are always very very strong within our work - and even*
> *when we were met with a brick wall, blank response, and parents were feeling*
> *very pressurised in terms of the welcome that they were not receiving, we knew*
> *that we had to tread very very carefully if we were to have any influence at all.*

The function here tended to be seen as 're-securing' the placements through a more
formal statutory role that offered reassurance to parents:

> *'In the early days, I guess, there were more exclusions and there were more*
> *incidences of parents…not being so happy with placements, and therefore….we*
> *definitely felt that part of the success was due to our delivering the sessional*
> *support on a regular basis. And that was tied up with what was written in the*
> *Statement and then in turn had an impact on parents' views about the security of*
> *their children's needs being met'.*   (Head of Learning Support)

The 'older parents' group also remembered the contributions of support teachers at this
early stage:

> *PG: So what did you get from them ?*
> *C: Support for me*
> *PG: So it's like an 'ally' again ?*
> *C: She was fantastic. You know, she had to take P. on, getting him to*
> (secondary school) – *it's a hard school – she said she would support for the first*
> *year…which she did*

> *D: I'm not sure 'ally' is the appropriate word…*(debate between group; some disagree)*….well, to some extent….what you needed then was an ally to make sure it didn't go all pear-shaped and your child had to be educated out of the school[49].*

The early role of the support services appears to have been focused more around individuals, with broader involvement in training/whole-school support activities coming at a later stage.

Other services such as the Educational Psychology Service saw their contribution rather differently, focusing on <u>process</u> rather than specialist knowledge or curriculum expertise:

> *'I think that what we're very very good at is when things aren't working out whatever the system in operation – and people are anxious, angry, upset; there's failure, there's frustration. This is when a psychologist can help that process, unpick it, facilitate a shift – and sometimes you don't have to do a lot; what you do is to help them back on track and continue their work. So I think we are crucial in that way'*   (Principal Educational Psychologist)

The role of the psychologist tended not to be specifically mentioned by other interviewees. The Principal Psychologist referred to the low profile that he associated with the 'empowering tradition':

> *'So, that's a real frustration. I really don't think that…we get an appreciation of the subtlety and complexity of the work we do………If you adopt a model where you don't just tell people what to do…. but you're actually supporting and motivating people to maintain themselves and you're facilitating, people don't always go away and see how critical the role of the psychologist was. So there's another paradox there. The more successful you are, the less evident that you've been involved...if you're doing your job properly. And maybe we have to live with that.'.*

Whatever the nature of support service activity, there was general agreement that, on the ground level, the key task was to help increase the confidence of parents and schools in the viability and value of the mainstream option. As the Cabinet member commented:

> *'Giving the parents the confidence, then getting the staff with expertise, and giving the staff the expertise and confidence to do it, are the two barriers. And I think you decide you overcome them, and you overcome them by practical action.'*

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[49] In some ways, the support teacher are fulfilling an extension of the role that parents/carers were needing to do themselves in the early stages

6.4   Outcomes

The focus of this research was more on the process by which change is achieved, rather than on outcomes. However, outcomes are important to consider as (a) they can contribute to the way in which change is maintained (see next section) and (b) they are part of the changing social context that affects subsequent practice and thinking. As the Cabinet member commented:

> *'There was a small group* (of Councillors) *who couldn't understand what was going on, who opposed it because they believed that children would suffer because of the approach – but who were gradually won over as they saw the process happening. And then the majority of those who supported it became more and more supportive.'*

Most of the references to outcomes in the interview scripts were coded as 'positive'. References to negative outcomes (11) were largely confined to one interview (Senior Education Officer) and, even here, negatives were evenly balanced with positives[50].

Councillors, officers and support service managers tended to point to the reduction in levels of segregation and the fact that this trend had been maintained.

> *'To me, the closure of 6 of the* (special) *schools, and seeing the success of pupils as we moved on with the services is something that we <u>should</u> be proud of. The fact that many children have never spent any time in segregated provision, I think is very much in keeping with the original notion of what their entitlement should be'*   (Head of Learning Support)

The parents of children with SEN ('new' and 'old') tended to talk about the benefits that had occurred for their own children:

> *'I think that, if my son had gone to a special school, he wouldn't have learned what he's doing now….He's got severe learning difficulties – and some behaviour problems sometimes. And I think…..the way he is now, he wouldn't have learned so much'*   (Parent from 'new parents' group)

> *'Well, I've got to say that….although we had high expectations and we didn't believe the fact that…..our children wouldn't learn,…..I never had any expectation that E. would be able to read properly, would be able to…have access to the whole curriculum, get so much out of the whole curriculum, to have all those experiences with friends'*   (member of 'old parents' group)

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[50] It is important to see this in the context of the sample selected to interview. A broader sample (for example, including a greater number of schools) might have led to a different picture.

There was also a positive impact on other children/'non-disabled peers':

> *'There is no doubt that some children (and even some quite…er…naughty children) actually respond in a much more compassionate way when confronted by children who have severe difficulties. And that of course has a wider implication. It's not just you don't learn to persecute, or you avoid phobias about children with disabilities (which people my age were brought up to have, or probably did have, cos' you never met them). It's not just that, but, if you learn, if you understand that it's really quite beyond the pale to take advantage of such a vulnerable child, then it affects how you relate to everyone else'*
> (Senior Education Officer)

And on other adults/wide society:

> *'I mean the best thing out of all of this, at the end of the day…is actually seeing how <u>other</u> people treat disability, seeing how other people have actually smiled and learned a lot about children'*   (member of 'old parents' group)

However, the highest number of references to positive outcomes related to changes that had occurred for teachers and schools. Weighing up the positives and negatives associated with mainstreaming, the Senior Education Officer concluded:

> *'I was initially dismissive (it probably wouldn't be unfair to say) of the sort of arguments* (for integration) – *actually people would sometimes be talking about the integration of <u>parents</u> (you know what I mean) rather than children. I used to feel that talk about location or social integration was a bit of an indulgence. And perhaps I occasionally still think that.* (However) *I am very impressed by the influence that the presence of children with severe handicaps on the mainstream site has had on the ethos of those schools and on the children and on the other children. And whereas I might have thought that was a relatively minor matter, initially, I see it as actually something rather more substantial now.'*

A number of interviewees referred to the benefits that inclusion of children with significant SEN and disabilities brought to the broader quality of teaching and learning in schools (raising the overall level of achievement). Reference was made to the rise in attainments/'standards' that had occurred since the inclusion policy had started to be implemented. This was exemplified at the individual case level by the following story told by one of the 'old parents' group:

> *'After about 3 weeks* (following admission to mainstream)*, Mrs C. called me in and said 'I've got to tell you something. I've been keeping a diary on L. for the last month'. And I said 'oh, why's that?'. And she said, 'well, a couple of years ago I had a very difficult child and I had to gather evidence to get rid of her. And I've been keeping a diary on L., but I've just read it and I've just realised she's been no different from anybody else in the class'………And she'd realised*

that she was being so unfair on her…And after we'd finished, she said, even though she'd been teaching so long, having L. in the class made her think (with the teacher who'd been coming in to show her how to do differentiation); how L. had helped her deal with quite a few of the other children in the class; it made her reassess how she taught..'

Schools were reported to have become more willing to include children with more significant needs and disabilities, and parents keener to explore the mainstream option. The policy had also had some benefits in attracting new staff who were committed to this approach.

On the negative side, initially at least, the policy had led to some difficulties in recruitment:

> *'I know for a fact that some lecturers in colleges of education have put their students off coming here...they've thought our policy was lunatic'*
> (Senior Education Officer).

The Senior Education Officer was also concerned that the loss of special schools might have made it more difficult for the Borough to attract staff with specialist skills.

He also reported a tendency for the inclusion policy to become a scapegoat for other issues in schools:

> *'What I'm concerned about is that teachers in most schools in most parts of the country have difficulties with children who don't behave. In most parts of the country, there are special schools and they realise that this is part of the teacher's lot everywhere. I have been concerned that teachers here… whenever they encounter difficulties and frustrations of this kind…should always put the whole blame for it at the LEA's door – because of our so-called integration policy'*

The loss of special schools was also a possible issue for a member of the 'new parents' group, who was nevertheless quite happy with the mainstream option for her own son:

> *'It's swung too much the other way. Some parents don't want to lose the special schools for the kinds of children we are talking about, that may have…very challenging behaviour…I do think, for my son…mainstream is working for him, but I do wonder, you know, whether it's good for all children. Some children do need that special school, that specialist help'.*

6.5   The future: threats and maintaining factors:

Interviewees had differing perspectives about the long-term future of inclusion in the Borough. Some saw it as unlikely that things would 'regress', that change was now 'embedded':

> *'There's no question of going back in my mind'* (Senior Education Officer)

> *'I think, because of the years that have gone past, it has become almost the normal natural way of things because we have been doing it so long. So, although there are factors against it now, it is so embedded and so much a part of the* (Authority's) *culture'*   (Head of Learning Support)

> *'There are too many people who would not be happy for it to go backwards'* (member of the 'old parents' group)

> *'I think it's embedded in the culture of the school. I'd be as brave to say 'this is part of the school and it's well-embedded'. And I think, even when I'm not here, it will continue'*   (primary Head Teacher)

> *'The thing you notice here is that…there has developed, as a result of our policy of inclusion, a general sort of inclusive ethos which you are aware of and you are not aware of in schools in other places. People don't make remarks about 'children like that shouldn't be in this school'………..There is a genuine view which gets internalised by even some quite sort of, you know, conservative teachers, that this is a thoroughly desirable approach. And it works through into things like not excluding children if this could possibly be helped – and this is genuine….'*   (Senior Education Officer)

Others, however, saw a need for much more active maintenance, to avoid things 'slipping back':

> *'My analogy is that the logical state of affairs, where you want quick sorted out cost-effective ways of educating young people with SEN is that you go for separate schools and opening segregated schools. And I think that's how it is. If you don't look after things, then I think things regress back to segregation. Because it's the easiest, most logical, most administratively straightforward way of organising education'*

> *'By definition, then, I think inclusion is the opposite end of the pole. It's the one that needs most energy, commitment'*   (Principal Educational Psychologist)

There were a relatively high number of references within interviews to the maintaining role played by support services, particularly in relation to their 'actions' (35) and 'skills' (18). At a general level, support services were seen as continuing to offer a 'safety valve' for parents and schools in the event of significant difficulties:

'For me, within the school, things have been jogging along quite well; you don't feel you need to go to them....I mean maybe you rely on them more if there are more difficulties' (Discussion between members of 'new parents' group).

'I think there is the safety valve as well that schools need……in some ways, it's kind of 'psychological': schools like to know that there is someone who will come and help' (Head of Behaviour Support Service)

Some of the support services' actions reflected this general (reassurance) role:

'Some of the things I still hear requested by schools, I do feel 'a relatively experienced teacher should know the answer to that question; you do not need the help of a person with expertise' – occasionally you do. The proportion of questions that really require a degree of expertise in a specialist area, a lot of it may just be good teaching' (Head of Learning Support)

However, the support services' aspirations had become more directed towards 'capacity-building'. There was an emphasis on schools taking more responsibility themselves and developing the requisite skills and resources to do so. There had been a shift to 'advice' from 'support'[51]:

'They have built into their time that they can have referrals of individual students and they will advise, but very seldom do they go in and do much support' (Inclusion Support Officer)

'We kept all the specialist people, the dyslexia, autism etc so that they could go ………actually not deal with the children in the schools, but train the staff to deal with the children….' (Cabinet Member)

'All of my teams work on a partnership agreement now – and it has been with some difficulty for me because not all staff in schools wish to take the time to fill the forms out and can't reach agreement. We are very aware of the dependency/ reliance culture and are working very hard to still empower schools, still enable schools to take the responsibility' (Head of Learning Support)

The support was needing to become more focused:

'I think the BDSAT team (Behaviour Support) *does a good job. They have given lots of support to senior managers…M. certainly helped B. (secondary school) get out of special measures by the work he did there'*

'I think the training is very important: coordinated training programmes for staff… and we need to get better at that………We have to have an overview of what is going on in schools, and we have to be able to intervene if there are difficulties' (Head of Behaviour Support)

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[51] This was less the case with the sensory-impaired support teams who tended to argue for a continuing 'direct teaching' as well as advisory role.

While there was an emphasis on the importance of retaining 'specialist skills and expertise', some argued that this was increasingly available through a range of sources (other mainstream schools with relevant experience; resourced provision; practitioner networks) in addition to the traditional central support service route:

> *'There are other forms of training where you're asking people to reflect on their current practice and decide where they're going. Now, I think that kind of discussion is going on, particularly some of the schools with the children with the more severe, more profound, difficulties: discussion among the staff, amongst the support staff, about how they can…get the system working…'*
> (Inclusion Development Officer)

> *'I think whole school support has to be the way forward…you have to be able to deal with the individual referrals and what you're actually going to do there. But…if you can embed it in certain schools, then you move onto another school…we've got evidence that that works….'*   (Head of SEN)

The need for mainstream schools themselves to 'take ownership' of inclusion, and of pupils with SEN and disabilities 'as part of their normal responsibility' was a key theme across the majority of interviews. Table 13 (above) shows an even greater emphasis within coding references to the maintaining role played by schools, than to the contribution made by support services. School 'ownership' had the highest number of references (39) within the 'maintaining factors' category.

The Inclusion Development Officer referred to a recent event that, in his view, demonstrated how far things had progressed on this dimension:

> *'We had a conference last Friday where we had a couple of Head Teachers from two of the schools that are quite heavily committed to inclusion…there was about 30 head teachers and these were the 2 people presenting with us (so they were probably an unrepresentative sample). And listening to them speaking, they were talking about helping each other and a commitment to other schools in the area, and fulfilling their responsibility….I mean, if a child comes to the school with quite severe difficulties, then, if they possibly can do, being willing….I think there's a realisation that you've got to do your bit'.*

One of the 'old parents' group, now a mainstream secondary school governor, reported on a recent presentation to governors from an Assistant Head Teacher 'whose job it was to develop language across the curriculum':

> *'She came and did a presentation to the Curriculum Committee. And she's got this beautiful little folder for kids, with a snake, and positions on it – where are*

you on the snake ? - you know, 'I can do this, I can do that' and tick the box. And so, I've got in the back of my mind 'what questions am I going to ask her ?' Well, first of all, bloody P scales, you know ! So, she's finishing this demonstration and she fishes another thing out of her bag, which is exactly the same thing, same colour, same design and everything, and it's for children working towards level 1. So she'd already done it, she'd already thought about it…and that just came, you know, out of the woodwork, as a normal process….'

School ownership needed to be mirrored by broader ownership across the Education Department:

'I think it's to do with the ability the Authority's got to support schools in a different way, in a far more joined up way, that is actually going to stop things from going backwards….'

'I think that training needs to be brought together, so you don't have SEN training and then curriculum training. Training should be organised, planned and delivered as a whole. I think the other thing we need to develop is whole school self-assessment…. That needs to be broadened to include criteria around inclusion, that are then measured against by the SDOs (School Development Officers)*. Because I think the inclusion agenda has got to become much more part of the school…what the SDOs are actually doing'* (Head of SEN)

Interviews suggested that there was some way to go to achieve this aim.

A major strategic step had recently been taken[52] to transfer funding for SEN from the centre to schools, through the delegation of a substantial proportion of the Local Authority's SEN support service budget[53]. Though this had been a significant organisational challenge, the Senior Education Officer concluded:

'In the end, you have to keep reminding people, 'look, the school – you – are responsible for the SEN; the Authority's not responsible for doing it in your school, you are actually responsible – we're supporting you. But, in the end, the delegation was a necessary step to get people to take this on board'

'A high level of statemented children in an inclusive environment is just not consistent…But I'm happy with our current position, whereby we've delegated resources and at the same time reduced statements. That was the 'right move' – it should have been done earlier. It was also the right move because it gives schools more ownership of SEN than they had before….'.

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[52] In which the researcher had been involved (in a consultancy role)
[53] This had been a substantial amount of money, including not only the costs of the peripatetic support teams but also the provision made for individual children with statements in the mainstream sector (statementing levels were well above the national average)

And the Head of Learning Support (whose staff had been directly affected by the change) commented:

> *'Now we are not reliant on statements, it is certainly the responsibility of the schools to show parents that they can manage the support in a positive way, meet the children's needs and ensure that they are making progress – because that word is now very very important…In the early days, we knew whether our pupils…were making good progress because we were actually writing the IEPs* (individual education programmes). *Now, it is a question of ensuring that staff in schools have the mechanisms to write small targets and include the child, include the parents, do all those things that we were doing in the past. But they are doing it now and working towards real learning…'*

In practice, a number of staff from the SEN support services had been redeployed to schools, as part of the devolution arrangements. This was seen as a positive move as it ensured that skills were not lost:

> *'I think it was good for the schools. It then became their children, to a greater extent. And they had far more expertise in schools than they'd had before, on a regular basis'*   (Head of Hearing Impaired Support Team)

> *'If they're there* (central) *and going to a school and being called upon, the schools then see 'those are the people that sort out the children with special educational needs' whereas of course the whole staff need to do this. But of course, when they become part of the staff for a full week or part of the week, they become part of the staff of the school…We have to make sure…that the staff don't see this as the 'parachute group' but see this as part of the teamwork to deal with inclusion'*   (Cabinet Member)

As well as strengthening school ownership, delegation was seen by some (references made in 6/11 sources) as a potential <u>threat</u> to the maintenance of inclusion. Some primary schools might see themselves as less well supported (psychologically). Good schools would make good use of the opportunity but others might not assume the accompanying responsibilities, and still expect the same level of external service, putting more pressures on the 'residual' central teams.

However, the balance of views was that the change had been beneficial to the progress of inclusion in the Borough and was a 'logical next step'.

> *'I think what has happened is that there are a hell of a lot more people in mainstream schools who have really had to shape up and develop good practice and get some training. And I've been surprised at sometimes what they would have thought was an impossible job has turned out to be professionally rewarding – and they've learned a lot…So, I actually think that the fear that*

somehow the whole system would collapse if you didn't have these central teams
has not happened. And I've seen some real strong developments'.
(Principal Educational Psychologist)

By contrast, those teams that had been unaffected by delegation (Preschool and Sensory-Impaired support teams) were seen as a potential obstruction to the proper transfer of responsibility:

> *'The strength of the Preschool Home Visiting Team in those early days was crucial. But the way it's now organised and the way in which it hasn't adapted actually prevents schools from learning and taking responsibility…some of their practices are too wrapped up sometimes with individual: they don't see the bigger picture of the educational way of getting early intervention under way. They tend to be advocates and fight battles. And the irony is that sometimes they advise teachers and parents about some very segregationist practices. For example, 'I don't think you should take this child unless you get the LEA to make sure support is provided all day'…The irony is that that single service was probably one of the most important ones in terms of getting inclusion starting off, but has developed into something that's maybe holding certain processes back….'*

> (And the sensory-impaired support teams?) *'Probably they're a bit in the same mould….they're champions in their own corner. I think that, if they heard me speaking this, they'd be surprised…and that's part of the issue. I don't think they're actually aware that some of this sometimes prevents things moving forward – they could become an obstacle in themselves'*
> (Principal Educational Psychologist)

A smaller number of references were made to a range of other local 'threats'. These included the loss of skills and experience through staff turnover, at both school and support service level, and difficulties in recruiting staff with particular areas of specialist knowledge. This was balanced by the influx of new staff, many of whom were reported to have been attracted to working in the Borough because of its policy and values. There was concern among some interviewees that the appointment process for key posts within schools might not focus sufficiently on the need for inclusive values. The primary Head Teacher interviewed put this particularly strongly:

> *'Places like* (here) *need to say……… 'I'm not sure you can come here, unless you are willing – and make that commitment'….you know, it should be an honour to work here. I know that's quite hard, but I think that comes from a belief. It's not good enough to work here and…. exclude children. It really isn't good enough.'*

Some interviewees identified a threat from parents/carers who might have different aspirations for their children's schooling, and who might prefer more specialist alternatives[54]. At the time of the interviews, this issue was particularly salient, following Baroness Warnock's much publicised recantation on inclusion (2005). As one of the 'old parents' group commented:

> *'When all this started, I remember saying…(and I've said this recently with Warnock and that….that, in another 20 years, things might go full circle and, if we didn't get* (full) *inclusion, people might clamouring for special school'*

The biggest 'threat' was seen as coming from parents of children with autism, who wanted a greater 'choice' of provision, related to the individual needs of their child. Some interviewees attributed this pressure to a growth in individual consumerism:

> *'What you've got in mind with the parents of autistic children is the current pressure movement, and I suspect quite a lot of that is for children operating at the higher end of the spectrum…and, behind that, is a middle class mindset that 'my child's special and needs special'...* (member of 'old parents' group)

> *'In some cases, parents of children with autism and dyslexia in particular, they're looking for the 'wondercure'. And I don't think you can legislate against that – you've just got to try to keep on helping them – other parents will convince them the 'wondercure' doesn't exist'* (Cabinet Member)

Others saw it as a more legitimate response to existing quality issues:

> *'I still don't think that, in the Borough, they are good enough at having the <u>best</u> expertise, and make sure that…schools (the people who need to know) know the best practice for every child'* (member of 'old parents' group)

> *'If schools don't evidence progress, if parents don't feel they are being supported and listened to, if they can't see the progress of their kids, if they don't see their kids being happy in the school, then they're going to demand (specialist alternatives)…'* (Head of SEN)

The Cabinet Member saw parental pressure as a genuine threat:

> *'You could have a campaign to open a special school. And it could be either set up privately, of course, under the new educational arrangements, or you could have a group of members decide that……this is the best way forward'*

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[54] To some extent, the Borough had accommodated this in the past by a relatively tolerant response to parents requesting special school placements in neighbouring Boroughs. In 2005, over 100 children were attending this kind of provision.

There was some evidence that this was being addressed <u>politically</u> as well as by building the confidence of potential 'parent dissidents' at the individual level. One of the 'old parents' group (now a Councillor) commented:

> *'It's very much now why* (here)*, I think inclusion will stay, is that we try to think ahead of the game'*

He went on to describe an example where parents/carers of autistic children were pushing for a residential specialist provision – an initiative which was 'headed off' by a combination of councillors and parent advocates who were able to present a more inclusive alternative. In the view of some interviewees, there was a need for continuing input from a number of 'key individuals', who might be described as 'guardians' of the policy. At the political level:

> *PG: Could things ever go backwards ? (you're saying you put yourself in various positions – but let's say, for example, you were no longer on the Council, K. was no longer a school governor)....if you all went to the Hebrides, nothing would change ?*
> *S.: No*
> *K: mmmm – not sure* (discussion with 'old parents' group)

And at the professional level:

> *'There's a hidden group of people who keep it going…it can be a burden…they need to feel supported. And you need to harness that 'hard core' group of committed inclusionists'* (Principal Educational Psychologist)

For the PEP and some of his professional colleagues, the most significant 'threat' to inclusion was the loss of 'strategic priority' to this policy, compared to the early days. While there had been some 'embedding' of inclusion over time, the 'edifice' was still insecure, as it was still too dependent on a small number of individuals:

> *'Never once have we been able to take it from that level and get it 'up front'. It hasn't happened because I don't think* (the issues) *are* (more broadly) *understood – and priority has slipped....It was very clear in 1989 but people have gone and it's harder to replace those people and that experience – it takes time'.*

A number of interviewees (particularly officers/managers within the SEN area) felt that there had been a 'loss of momentum'. Earlier gains had been maintained, but it had been difficult to move further forward, for example, with regard to the remaining specialist provision (the single special school for severe/profound learning disabilities and the

mainstream resourced provision, which had been intended as a 'transitional step' to more universal inclusive schooling).

The 'threat' with the highest number of references (25, 8/11 sources) was 'national government policy'. This was less to do with an overt change in Government policy on inclusion, but more down to other increasing national pressures on schools (such as the 'standards' agenda).

> *'Schools have begged me not to ask them to take children, and things like that. And I know perfectly well what's behind this: it's the relentless pressure to raise standards. And it must have an exclusive tendency – there can't be any doubt about that.'*

> *'And the real issue is that there is a conflict between the relentless pressure every year for results to go up, and the time and resources that are needed to make a success of integrating a child with a lot of difficulties.'*
> (Senior Education Officer)

> *'I think we have come along a path that has meant there <u>has</u> been more general acceptance of the policy and strategy but at the same time certain national initiatives and pressures have made it very difficult because teachers are worn out with education and leaving the profession and therefore it causes more problems for us in terms of making it happen'* (Head of Learning Support)

> *'There's so much emphasis on that single judgement (standards) that it's really hard for schools, actually'* (Head of Behaviour Support)

It also related to the reduction in individual Local Authority power/autonomy and the lack of Government 'force'/commitment to promote more inclusive practice in other parts of the country.

> *'What seems to have happened (and it's not just in inclusive education) is that the 'go-between' role for the LEA is being diminished. And the stuff is coming from the 'top'….certainly the role of the LEA is getting less and less'.*
> (Inclusion Development Officer)

> *'When you go to some other Authority or national events, it's quite shocking* (attitudes and lack of inclusive practice). *I think Government…have bigger responsibilities that they haven't fulfilled, to make this successful. There's a lot more that needs to be done'* (Primary Head Teacher)

> *'I can think of one thing that would 'balls it all up' – which is the Government's proposal to have larger local education authorities. If they abolished our Education Authority and it was us* + other neighbouring ones, *that would ……..'balls it up'……the danger is we're an island in a sea of segregation !'*
> (member of the 'old parents' group)

6.6   Broader perspectives on developing inclusion at Local Authority level:

At the time of this research, and even now as it is being written up, the Borough remains one of a relatively few Authorities, that have made a significant impact on their 'segregation levels' (CSIE 2001, 2005). In his interview, the Cabinet Member reflected:

> *'I think the sadness (and I was reading the CSIE statistics the other day) is the slowness with which this is spreading around the country – people say 'it's all too difficult'*

This raises the question of <u>generalisation</u>, not just in research terms, in relation to the causal power of the range of factors/influences identified in interviewee accounts of the Borough's 'story', but also the degree to which generalisation is possible from a social phenomenon that is potentially 'unique'.

Two sorts of generalisation questions can be asked at this stage:

1) Could the development of inclusion in the Borough be implemented in a similar way, if it was beginning at this point in time (ie in the new millennium, as opposed to 20 years earlier) ? Could the same influences be brought to bear ? Would there be fewer/more barriers ? (generalisation across time)

2) Could it happen in the same way in other Local Authorities, either at this point in time, or if they had started simultaneously ? Or were/are there specific contextual features of this particular Borough that would limit the extension of this approach ? (generalisation across settings)

In order to explore these aspects, interviewees were given hypothetical scenarios to consider, for example:

Q: if you became Director of another Local Authority tomorrow (comparable Borough named), and there was a high level of segregation/reliance on special school provision, do you think things could/would be the same ? And what would you do to achieve this ?

Q: do you think it would be possible for you to develop inclusion in your Authority in the same way if you were starting now ?

This section summarises some of the broader perspectives/reflections offered by interviewees on these issues. They help identify those factors that are seen as more likely to have a more 'robust' and universal influence, and those that are more susceptible to differences in context.

6.6.1 'Starting anew':

A number of interviewees referred to changes in the national context since the Borough's inclusion policy was originally introduced. In particular, the application of Disability Discrimination legislation to schools, and the strengthening of parents and children's right of 'choice' for mainstream education (SEN & Disability Act 2001) legitimised policies and practices aimed at removing traditional access barriers. These were seen to reinforce the directions set out in the 1981 Education Act, which had provided support to parents arguing for mainstream schooling in the early stages of local policy development.

On the other hand, broader pressures on schools and, in particular, the emphasis on the narrower 'standards' agenda (and the accompanying 'league tables'), were seen to be creating greater resistance to inclusion 'on the ground'. Although there had been attempts at both national and local level to reconcile the two agendas, the 'policy tension' was leading to ambivalence in the behaviour of Government bodies (DCSF, OfSTED), which was being mirrored on the ground within Local Authorities and schools.

An Authority embarking on its 'inclusion journey' at the current time would need to work harder to make the links between mainstreaming and school quality, and to ensure that these were embedded within its broader approach to school improvement and monitoring.

Local Authorities starting their journey now would also be working within a context where they (and schools) generally have less autonomy. In the early days of the inclusion policy in the Borough (mid/late 1980s), the Authority sought validation from central government and, in some instances, was limited by it. But there was a stronger overall sense of local identity, with Local Authorities and individual schools having

more capacity to determine their own destiny. The current policy environment was seen as more restrictive/'demand-based'.

In this context, national demands/commands in relation to inclusion were seen as less clear, with ambivalence tending to have an inhibiting rather than enabling effect, within a national culture that had become generally more prescriptive. As the Head of Behaviour Support (more recently appointed to the Authority) commented:

> *'In a way, I think it might be harder to do it now…The Government's seemed to have embraced the inclusion agenda. But the reality of the policies that come down is that they are much more ambivalent about it. And this is a Government that controls what goes on in education very tightly. So I don't think there's quite the space for a group of parents and councillors to say 'we've got a good idea – let's make this happen'. I think it's so much more tightly controlled …there's a lot less political space, anyway, for people to get engaged and change things'.*

In this context, individual Local Authorities were much more reliant on their ability to persuade and influence more informally:

> *'At the local level, it's much more down to persuasion and good example – you know, feeling bad because fellow schools are doing different things'*
> (Inclusion Development Officer)

So, how would the Borough achieve this with a substantially reduced central capacity (following the recent delegation of a large part of their support service budget)? In retrospect, a number of interviewees felt that this might not be such a bad thing.

> *'(The Borough) went through a stage of having a very heavy central support team, which we were allowed to do and able to do at that time. We found that very useful, I think. At that time, it allayed…people's fears, parents' fears, staff fears in schools, through the existence of a tangible support team that they could see was a way forward…The key question is 'can you jump that stage? can you go straight into a delegated situation', in which case how do you get your staff who are going to support those pupils (in schools), how do you get the training for them? I'm sure you can, but that is the question – it wasn't a question we had to answer at that time'* (Inclusion Development Officer)

> *'I think I would probably from choice delegate more than I would have done initially. But you have to have a focus for training and support; you have to have a key cadre of people that can provide the professional development that's required. If you haven't got that, you won't succeed'* (Senior Education Officer)

> *'As for support services, I'd move away from the massive big central core teams,*
> *but I think they'd be all core teams that are committed to inclusion….'* (PEP)

For change to occur now, there would need to be a key set of individuals with 'beliefs', 'commitment', and 'courage', who were prepared to make inclusion a strategic priority. In this Authority, the origins were with parents who took political power. Some interviewees emphasised the 'uniqueness' of this history:

> *'If you're saying 'we'll go back 15 years, that K. (parent + ex Chair of Education) doesn't exist, it would be interesting because it wasn't about K. being the politician, it was about her being the mother of a child with Down's syndrome, and it is the lobbying of that parental pressure that would have changed things….'* (Head of Learning Support)

However, others saw it as sufficient to have commitment from the Member or senior officer level:

> *'I think on balance I'd have to say that the member push was important'*
> (Senior Education Officer)

> *'I think you can have strong <u>officer</u> commitment and do it equally. You also need good officers who are committed to it, because officers are going to do the work. So, you're looking for officers who <u>believe</u> that it's possible and believe that it's right'* (Cabinet Member)

Interviewees also referred to the importance of the beliefs and commitment of members of the school leadership team, in securing ownership for inclusion at individual school level.

In terms of parental motivation and involvement, the current context might see a greater emphasis on mainstream <u>quality</u> and the right to specialist alternatives, where needed, now that the legal right to mainstream access had been achieved. The 'older parents' group reflected on the change in expectations that had occurred over time:

> *'I just thought 'she'll do what she can do'. And I wanted her to be offered the opportunity to try things…whatever she could do would be a bonus'*

> *'Their expectations might actually be higher than ours, because they start from it (inclusion) being normal. So, they're less tolerant, maybe, of things that we would have not taken any notice of…when things are not right, they might be more cross about it'*

In discussing alternative scenarios, there continued to be some ambivalence about the pace and style of change. Some officers and professionals felt that, if they were 'starting again', it would be better to have more time for preparation and training, planning, and more opportunities for constructive debate and discussion. Others argued that change needed to be more accelerated and ambitious, and would inevitably involve some professional discomfort. Change might even happen more quickly now that there was evidence of successful inclusion elsewhere.

Similarly, there were some differences in view as to whether 'local mainstream access for all' remained a realisable ideal – or whether Local Authorities needed to recognise the continuing need for specialist provision (special school/mainstream resource base) for a small number of children with the most complex/significant needs.

The Head of SEN, in particular, argued the need for much greater school involvement in leading change, with less reliance on Local Authority capacity and management:

> *'If you started from a point in a school where the senior management team are totally behind what you are doing (and this is evaluated over a period….), then you have some evidence that you can give to other schools…other staff can go into the school and see it happening. So, maybe I'd start that way….'*

> *'Or the other thing would be to use a special school and try and change its nature…. to have more dual roles...so that they have more of an outreach element'*

Developments might also be affected by the change in 'discourse' around inclusion that had occurred during recent years, which had led to it becoming much more broadly defined. For example, the Head of Behaviour Support questioned whether inclusion should inevitably be defined in 'locational' terms:

> *'In some ways….the commitment to inclusion that was in the members' statement was quite a straitjacket….the assumption that every child would go to a particular classroom at their neighbourhood school. And I don't think we can sustain that…. (partly because of the Government's standards agenda and all those pressures on schools)….I think we have to have a view of inclusion that says 'all kids are part of our school community, but they might be having all kinds of other experiences')'*

6.6.2 'Moving elsewhere':

Some interviewees pointed to particular characteristics of the Borough as an area that might be more conducive to the development of inclusion. Change might be more difficult in larger Authorities:

> *'It seems to me in bigger Authorities it is harder to have a total view of 'this is what we're going to do and we're not going to be stopped in the process'...L. always said that, if you consult for everything, you will not actually move forward'*   (Head of Learning Support)

It might be more challenging in Authorities that were more affluent and less diverse. Teachers in the Borough were more likely to be politically 'left of centre' and responsive to the broader equal opportunities/human rights agenda. By necessity, they also had to be willing to differentiate their teaching to individual needs because of the degree of diversity in the child population. In some other Authorities, 'inclusion' might be seen as more of an 'optional activity'.

The effects of parental consumerism (demand for specialist alternatives) were likely to be less pronounced in the Borough because of the demography of the area:

> *'Because of the social make-up of the area, you don't have people like that here....or the odd one'*   (member of 'old parents' group)

There were differing views about the importance of <u>resources</u>. The Senior Education Officer, for example, saw finance as a key consideration. The Cabinet Member, on the other hand, saw this as less of an issue, provided there was a clear commitment to release funds from the special schools sector and use these for mainstream development and support:

> *'I think you would remove the finance side from the word go, because you don't have to spend millions and millions of pounds'*

> *'We had the money. But it was interesting because, though we didn't actually save any money in the end, we certainly didn't spend any more money, though sometimes we double-funded'*

The key element that would be needed in his view, shared by the significant majority of interviewees, was the strategic priority given by the Authority to inclusion, which was likely to be led by the 'belief and commitment' of key individuals. This is exemplified best by the response of the Senior Education Officer to 'moving Borough' scenario.

Throughout his interview, he had shown mixed feelings about the policy and the way it had been implemented, but had overall come to believe that the initiative had been worthwhile. Transposed to another Borough, however, as an officer without the current local political direction, he might think differently:

> *'What would I do if I suddenly had more or less a free hand (not that I ever would in practice)? I suppose one thing I would say here is that…I do take a genuine pride in what we've achieved. But I'm not sure that the degree of professional priority that we've given it here (and at times the financial priority as well….)…looking at all the priorities for Education that we have, I'm not sure I would personally prioritise, say, the importance of closing a school for physically disabled children and integrating them (and spending a million pounds in order to do that in a secondary school) ……at a time when we couldn't re-roof (other schools). I mean, if members tell you, after discussion, 'this is what they want you to do', well then you enter into it and you do it. But, if someone asks you 'where do the priorities lie?', I'm not sure I'd have given – would give – the degree of priority that it has received here'.*

> *'So, I suppose I would, in the end, go back to a priority of 'functional integration'. I don't think I would prioritise uneconomic use, very expensive use of one-to-one staff input in primary schools for severely disabled, handicapped children. I would struggle to argue that was a good use of resources'.*

*The*n, a moment of further reflection:

> *'I suspect actually that I probably would give it higher priority than I think …because I would probably be so appalled and affronted by the prejudice that I encountered…'*

….before confirming his earlier position.

For the Senior Education Officer, with a strong utilitarian philosophy (greatest good for the greatest number), 'strategic priority' for inclusion was achieved through 'member commitment', which derived in turn from the individual/personal beliefs and commitment of a small group of parents. Without this, things might have been very different.

6.7   Overview of single case-study findings:

The purpose of undertaking this study was to secure a more 'in-depth' understanding of the development of inclusive practice and culture at local authority level. There was a need to shed further light on the relationship between the priority given by officers and support services to this goal and the extent to which use is made of special school

provision (as identified in the quantitative analysis of data obtained from the researcher's earlier DfEE/NASEN study). It also aimed to explore possible routes to achieving the kind of 'inclusive ethos' that was seen as significant in two of the three earlier local authority case studies (the origins of which respondents had found difficult to explain). And finally, it sought to clarify how the influence of local authorities is exerted (since local authority 'capacity' to do this was identified as a key ingredient in the previous case study interviews).

The history of the development of inclusion in the single case-study Authority is perhaps best characterised in 4 phases. Each phase has a number of defining features, with a number of positive/enabling factors and issues/barriers. These are summarised below (Table 14). The findings of this case study contrast significantly with those of the earlier three, in so far as change was led by a group of parents who assumed political power to help achieve their objectives. In this sense, the Borough's 'story' appears relatively unique.

> *'From what I'm told, but I think this does make sense, it was parent-led and I think that is very different to a lot of other authorities'* (Head of SEN)

For a group of parents to achieve such substantial change, significant personal commitment was necessary. This appeared to be linked partly to parents' negative experience of the existing system, which in turn derived from the way they saw their own children and viewed disability in the context of their family lives.

One of the 'old parents' group articulated this particularly clearly:

> *'I think one of the things that happened to us was that…you had this child, and very quickly, your concept of what's normal just expands to include the new arrival. So, E. arrived, and you've still got the normal family. And then school comes up – and you expect school to reflect the family situation. So you expect the world outside the home to reflect what your feelings are about you child – and the way you see your children'*

In other words, mainstream inclusion becomes a logical extension of 'inclusion' at the family level. Encountering a less inclusive response from the outside world provoked strong emotions for the 'old parents' group. For example, one parent recounted the story of an insurance company refusing to insure the family for a holiday abroad:

'the letter said…we were only insured for our baggage – well what about my little daughter? And there's no-one treating my daughter, which I've always wanted, loved (I always wanted a daughter)….so you were quarrelling with them'.

Although parents might expect to experience some prejudice within the wider community, they were most aggrieved at the role of some professionals who they saw as spuriously 'objectifying' negative and discriminatory attitudes.

'Just being told by people who were paid lots of money to serve us and serve our children, and just being told lies and rubbish because they believed they should be segregated. I mean, that gave me a lot of strength actually to prove them wrong…'

The parents could have limited their efforts to securing mainstream placements for their own children, but they moved beyond this. It is difficult to understand exactly what led to this change from a 'parental' to a 'political' discourse. However, it seems to have been more than just a strategy for achieving beneficial outcomes for their own children (as one mainstream head teacher providing written comments suggested). Legitimation of their own aspirations through the link to the human rights agenda may have helped construct a 'bridge' for the discourse shift. But there was also a sense of responsibility to their broader community which may reflect a different political context to the more 'consumerist'/individualistic culture that is perhaps currently in place:

'Because of the (demographic) *make-up of the Borough, even though we were all people from working class backgrounds, we were still, being white, feeling in a privileged position. And it was just obvious around us that there was going to be hundreds of other people never going to have a thing – and it was therefore important to do something big and more than just something for our own children'.*   (member of 'old parents' group)

Table 14:   Phases of development of inclusion in the single-case study Authority

Phase	Features	Enabling factors	Issues/barriers
'Pre-political'	Professionally-led	Training	Professional power
	Gradual	Development of professional skills	Assumptions about provision: - category match - quality
	'Functional integration'	Experience of reintegration	
		Individual professional commitment	

'Parent-political'	Parent-led, shifting to political/member-led Accelerated Opportunistic Directive Desegregation	Negative experience of individual parents 'Legitimacy' - link to equal opps/ human rights - informational power (1981 Act) Teacher beliefs - liberal/socialist culture - preschool service (advocacy) Support service role 'Opportunities' (eg for special school closures)	Professional alienation Varying commitment from schools Special school resistance Central government requirements
Maintenance/ consolidation	Political compromise (eg resource bases) Embedding Capacity-building and school ownership	Maintenance of some specialist provision 'Culture'/expectations Delegation of funding to schools 'Rehearsal'/scripts	Loss of strategic priority Loss of key individual 'drivers' Energy loss Staff turnover/ recruitment
The future (2004+)	Reaffirmation of broad policy directions 'Normalisation' of mainstream expectation Broader ownership across services/Council	New Director's review Stronger leadership from mainstream sector (training/sharing good practice) Advent of Children's Services ?	Central government ambivalence Pressures on schools Consumerism Loss of LA influence/ power

Some of the 'background conditions' prevailing in the Borough during the late 1980s also make this case study relatively unique. For example, there was a relatively left-wing teaching community who were already sensitized to a variety of discrimination and human rights issues (anti-racism etc), which allowed them to look beyond their own immediate interests. Special schools were housed in poor quality buildings and 'professional power' went relatively unchallenged. On the positive side, there had been a significant emphasis on training and skills development in relation to SEN and strong

commitment among some individual practitioners to enhancing mainstream access through promoting reintegration opportunities.

In this case study, the Local Authority's 'capacity' was exerted though a combination of the following:

1) Policy: in the end, the more radical version 'won through', which saw mainstreaming as a 'human rights' issue, with a need for a clear 'push' for desegregation, over as short a period as possible.

2) Opportunism: with this broad general direction and a clear commitment to pursue it, early changes were achieved through grasping opportunities as they arose rather than through a detailed 'linear' plan.

3) Strategic priority: to achieve change, there needed to be strong commitment at the senior officer/Director level, overseen by a small number of Council members who ensured this was a priority, as well as 'courage' to pursue this policy direction when challenges/difficulties occurred.

4) 'Critical moments':   there was some evidence that policy was established and strengthened through a series of 'critical moments'/policy 'tests', which required people to 'hold their nerve', and at times compromise/find alternative ways through. The process of policy development and implementation was not a linear one.

5) Policy to practice: support services played a significant role in promoting parent and school confidence in the mainstream option 'on the ground'. This was partly through 'softer' activities such as presence, support and persuasion, and partly through a more statutory role, securing individual pupil entitlement as part of the provision identified in children's statements of need. As the policy embedded, support services were moving towards a more core 'advisory' function.

The case study interviews reveal a range of strategies used to help maintain the Authority's inclusive ethos, once this had been established. These included:

Informal rules:

Examples: (i) *'we have been so entrenched in the whole* (Borough philosophy)
…'it's a sin and a crime' to retain children within this sort of moderate
learning difficulties provision'

(ii) '*in this Borough, you're expected to work in an inclusive style…and*
own the philosophy of inclusion'

Scripts and stories:

Examples: (i) repeated references to the link between inclusion and rising levels of
attainment in the Borough (in the face of the threat from the standards vs
inclusion debate)

(ii) repeated 'tales' from the 'bad old days' (particularly among the
parents' group) reinforcing group commitment to sustaining progress

Rehearsal:

Examples: (i) reviews and evaluations comment favourably on positive progress,
identify areas for further development and 're-energise' informal
'guardians' of the initiative

(ii) 'debate': some ambivalence about this, but seen to be a necessary
step to facilitate/test out broader ownership

Pre-emptive dialogue:

Example: identifying potential threats (eg new parental pressure groups/ demands
for more specialist alternatives) and 'getting in early'

Recruitment:

Example: *'we have always had questions on the (interview) panel about inclusion*
when recruiting new staff and, if they couldn't answer those questions
satisfactorily, then the chances are they would not be appointed'

In progressing inclusion beyond the 'maintenance' phase, a key strategic aim had been
to increase 'mainstream ownership'. This had been addressed by the devolution of a
significant proportion of central resources (support service capacity). There was also a
strong desire, particularly among the SEN officers and support service managers

interviewed for a greater profile for inclusion within the 'normal' processes for school quality monitoring and improvement. This was proving harder to achieve.

While this case study has a number of features that are 'unique', there are some aspects that are generalisable (drawing together the evidence from the generalisation questions in the single case-study interviews and making links to the other findings in chapter 5).

A strong common feature is the importance of commitment and beliefs at a senior level within the Authority (people with formal power: in the case of this Borough, Council members, and, in the other Areas, senior officers). This commitment might derive from personal ideology (Croll 2000a) or from the strength of local feeling (eg parents in the single case-study Authority, and voluntary organisations in Area A). There was less evidence that the commitment could be generated from within support services themselves (in a 'bottom-up' fashion, although this was more likely if they were managed by a senior officer with similar beliefs and some degree of 'formal power'.

In considering the generalisability of findings from this case study to other Local Authorities at the present time, three key dimensions emerged from the interviews:

Changing power relationships between national and local government:
Reference was made to the loss of 'space' for local policy influence in a context that had become increasingly centralised. It was felt that the 'ambivalence' of a national government that was usually fairly prescriptive about the shape and form of education had become an increasingly inhibiting influence at local level.

The shift to consumerism:
The group of parents who had initiated change in this Borough were concerned about their children's right to mainstream, which became construed as a broader political agenda (rights for all children). There was evidence from the 'new parents' group of a shift in thinking: to the right of parents as consumers to have a diversity of options linked to their child's individual needs and their own particular preferences. This is mirrored by national government policy, which is increasingly emphasising the primacy of the principle of 'parental choice' over other principles/values (eg mainstreaming, equity) that some professionals and parents might hold dear. To some extent, the statutory endorsement of parents' right to choose the mainstream option (even if this is

more limited in practice) has supported this shift from a 'rights' to a 'choice' agenda. As a result, parental pressure for inclusion and mainstreaming is likely to be more inconsistent and diffuse.

Changes to the discourse on 'inclusion':
The term 'inclusion' throughout this case study tended to be used interchangeably with desegregation and 'mainstream access' (62 references across 10/11 sources). However, since the interviews were carried out, the term 'inclusion' has started to be used in a wide variety of different ways (see Norwich & Gray 2007). At national level, the discourse includes such wide-ranging concepts as 'belonging' (which some children may experience more in special school settings) through to the need for a more diverse system of provision linked to a diversity of individual needs. For local authorities and schools, the broadening of the discourse makes it more difficult to determine and agree policy directions and assess progress.

In one sense, the link between inclusion and human rights in the Borough was consistent with a later definition of inclusion as 'educating for diversity'. However, the key difference was the strong belief that provision for diversity could and should be made within a mainstream setting (rather than the range of 'personalised alternative options' currently suggested by a number of authors, and to some extent, implied in national government policy). Within the current policy context, this assertion might be more difficult for a number of local authorities (and schools) to sustain.

The debate is perhaps best summarised by an excerpt from the case study interview with the mainstream primary Head and her (relatively newly-appointed) SENCO:

> SENCO: 'we try and ensure that <u>every</u> pupil has access to every day school life, to the curriculum, for their ability, where we look at the children from the perspective of not just their academic ability, but also their personal and social needs, and we try and support them there and work with their parents, to ensure they've got that, so we're all working together'
>
> HT: 'I think the word 'inclusion' now has a much greater perimeter than it did when I first thought about (it)....Inclusion for me still has 2 aspects: inclusion in its totality is about meeting <u>all</u> pupils' needs, but I'm still very aware of inclusion regarding pupils with particular needs.......and I'm referring to special needs: we talk about autistic pupils, Down's syndrome – and, for me, I have to do that, because it makes me aware as a Head that I can focus in to make sure that all these groups are (having their needs met). So, although I see inclusion in a way that means lots of aspects, for me, it's really important to

*focus down on those special needs pupils that have, you know, disabilities –
because that's the area we still find hugely challenging. And I don't want to lose
that focus….'*

*PG: 'And do you see it in any sense as 'all children from the locality' having
access to your school…which is another meaning of inclusion, in terms of where
children go to ?'*

*SENCO: 'Ermm – the children in the catchment area, yes – but only if it
provides…. If we have got the support in place and the provision that would
meet their needs effectively. If we haven't, then I think they need to look at other
schools that have got special facilities'*

CHAPTER 7:   DISCUSSION

7.1   Introduction

This chapter brings together the findings from the three elements of the research design and interprets them at a number of different levels. These are similar to the different levels of 'theoretical elaboration' outlined by Layder (1998) and others. Primary and secondary elaborations are linked directly to the analysis of the research data and refer back to the overall research questions presented in chapter 2 (section 2.5) of this thesis. Tertiary elaboration brings in broader theoretical resources, from general theory and other domains of knowledge. Layder (1998) advocates the use of such resources throughout the research process (before, during and after the data has been gathered). He argues that:

> *'...any attempt to trace connections between the formal and substantive theories associated with particular research areas or projects and more general theories and frameworks will help in drawing together what may otherwise remain disparate and fragmented aspects of sociological knowledge'* (p122)

In his view, this helps break down the barriers between 'empirical research' (with its tendency for '*specialist concentration on fairly narrowly defined areas*') and the world of 'general theorists' who:

> *'are often so preoccupied with the development and elaboration of the internal conceptual logic and reasoning of their schemas that they fail to produce theories that bear some clear and direct relation to the empirical world of applied research'* (p123).

Empirical research plays an important role in helping test, challenge and strengthen the 'explanatory usefulness' of existing theories, concepts and ideas as well as suggesting new models and ways of understanding social phenomena (in its own right).

The first part of this chapter addresses each of the original research questions in turn, drawing together evidence from all three data sources. A conceptual model is put forward to help understand the local authority's contribution to the development of inclusion, and comparisons and contrasts are made with the models proposed by Croll & Moses (1998) and Ainscow (2005). The second part considers the generalisation issue, making a link with some of the literature on organisational change. Broader features of the current and future social policy environment are then identified and

discussed. The final part of the chapter provides an opportunity to reflect on the research strategy used for this thesis and possible areas for further study, and to revisit the relationship between consultant and researcher roles, through a brief consideration of 'research utilisation' issues.

7.2   Implications of the findings for the research questions:

7.2.1   Do local authorities have an influence on the development of inclusion?

The strongest evidence for 'local authority effects' on inclusion comes from the single case study. Here, one local authority took radical action to reduce the number of children who were 'segregated', through the closure of most of its special schools and the transfer of pupils to local mainstream or mainstream resource base provision.

The analysis of the national quantitative data also provides some evidence of a link between senior officer/manager priorities (as defined by the importance they attach to inclusion as a measure of support service effectiveness) and inclusion (as defined by the percentage of pupils in special schools). The link is not necessarily causal, as managers could simply be reflecting the prevailing culture in their own particular authorities. However, the statistical significance of the correlation between managers' 'inclusion priority' and contemporaneous segregation <u>trends</u> provides some support for the hypothesis that local authorities might be having an influence.

The findings from the DfEE/NASEN case studies offer a more mixed picture. There was evidence in the interviews of local authority <u>intent</u> to promote inclusion but little clear evidence of <u>impact</u>. However, further inspection of the CSIE segregation data for 2002-4 revealed the following 'outcomes'[55]:

1) <u>Area A</u>, where there appeared to be the strongest senior officer commitment to promoting inclusion, the greatest degree of support service cohesion and the fewest contextual barriers, showed a small but continuing <u>reduction</u> in the percentage of pupils in special school provision (from a level that was already below average).

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[55] Interviews for these case studies were carried out in 2000/1.

2) <u>Area B</u>, where there was senior officer commitment, an aspiration to strengthen support service cohesion, but considerable contextual barriers, showed no change between 2002-3, and a slight <u>increase</u> in segregation levels in the following year.

3) <u>Area C</u>, where segregation levels had been below the national average but where there was a strong 'school-affiliation' culture and limited senior officer commitment to further reductions in special school numbers, showed a small but continuing <u>increase</u>[56] over the 2002-4 period.

These trends, though not significant in themselves, are supportive of the hypothetical model of influence suggested later on in this chapter (section 7.3 below).

While the research provides some evidence of local authority effects, it also raises issues about the degree to which 'local authorities' can be regarded as a 'unitary concept'. For example, in the single case study, a group of parents (with strong personal beliefs) were described as '*using the <u>institution</u> of the local authority*' to help achieve the change they desired. The importance of the personal commitment of key individuals (senior officers, local politicians, practitioners) suggests that the 'local authority' cannot be regarded as a simple causal variable.

It is also important to note that, while the research provides some evidence of local authority effects on the <u>presence</u> of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream settings, there is less clarity about their impact in terms of children's levels of <u>participation</u> and/or the degree of <u>mainstream ownership</u>.

7.2.2   How is this influence exerted ?

The two sets of case studies identified a number of factors that were seen as supporting local authority influence. Some of these can best be described as 'enabling conditions' or 'positive contextual features'. They are partly historical/cultural and partly linked to the beliefs and commitment of individual members of the organisation. Others can be described as 'levers', which reflect the more active steps that local authorities take in order try and influence change. Table 15 (below) shows the degree of match between those identified as influential in the current research and those proposed by Ainscow & Tweddle (2000; 2003 – see section 2.3.8 above).

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[56] Interestingly, senior officers predicted a small increase: a trend which they found acceptable

Table 15: **'Levers' used by local authorities to influence developments in inclusion: comparison between those proposed by Ainscow et al (2003) and those identified in the case study findings** (hyphen signifies limited use; highlights show main levers adopted)

Ainscow et al (2003)	Case study findings			
	Area A	Area B	Area C	Single case
Definition of inclusion	?included in consultation	-	-	defined narrowly -mainstreaming
Leadership	mainly middle management	mainly middle management	(inconsistent view)	politicians/ senior officers
Attitudes	-	*('by stealth')*	-	significant emphasis
Policy, planning and process	strategy	*(measured, 'realistic' approach)*	*(no explicit strategy)*	clear policy but change more 'opportunistic'
Structures, roles, responsibilities	officer appointments	reducing managerial fragmentation	special school Head seconded as SEN Adviser	*(more general endeavour)*
Funding	-	-	*(support service delegation for other reasons)*	used to strengthen inclusion at later stage
Support and challenge	service/team cohesion	emphasis on service cohesion	*('challenge' not approved)*	strong on both
Response to diversity	-	-	-	part of the 'political story'
Specialist provision	potential role in clusters	*(special schools actively inhibiting progress)*	developing role/ structure	diminishing role
Partnerships	already established	*(problematic area)*	*(affiliation culture)*	*('top-down' culture)*
Use of evidence	-	-	-	-
Staff development/ training	some	less overt	well established - 'market-led'	strong element for support services and schools
Others not included in Ainscow list	Locality emphasis	Developing alliances	Stronger school ownership	'Scripts and stories'

The comparison shows that a number of the levers used in the case study authorities can be mapped on to the Ainscow list. However, the match is not perfect even for the 'most influential' example (single case study). Change in this case was mainly 'top-down' rather than collaborative, with limited use of partnerships or involvement of the special school sector, and a relatively limited definition of inclusion (in Ainscow's terms). Other case study authorities varied in the degree to which they felt the inclusion agenda could be presented overtly, with the need in some cases for officers to address differing

strategic priorities and strengthen internal alliances before development plans could be more openly shared.

7.2.3   Which of the available models of local authority influence best fits the data?

The existing literature on local authority influences on inclusion is relatively limited. In section 2.4 above, I have identified two different models, which are characterised as follows:

| 1) Croll & Moses: | relatively pessimistic; 'top-down'; significant personal commitment required at the senior officer/political level |
| 2) Ainscow et al: | relatively optimistic; 'collaborative/consensual'; applicable across different local authority contexts |

Which of these models best fits the current research data ? The single case study offers an example of the former. In its origins, it may have been 'bottom up' with a group of parents coming together to achieve political change and exercising community power[57] (Polsby 1980). However, once formal political power was secured, through local council election, the change became more 'top-down' and directive. Although this proved uncomfortable for a number of officers and professionals, they recognised that this approach had had a stronger impact than if change had been 'professionally-led'. The more political approach was seen to have a number of benefits and costs, in terms of the quicker pace of change on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the degree to which change was 'owned' by teachers and schools[58].

The DfEE/NASEN case studies similarly highlighted the need for committed senior leadership (Area B) and the importance of senior officer/manager beliefs and values (Area A). Progress was compromised where senior leadership was more ambivalent about the value and priority of inclusion (as was suggested in Area C).

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[57] Polsby refers to similar examples of *'power exercised by voluntary groups representing coalitions of interest which are often united for a single issue and which vary considerably in their permanence'*
[58] Parallels can be drawn here with different models of organisational change. For example, Peters (1987) tends to favour a transformational ('big bang') approach, whereas others such as Handy (1986) argue that effective change is more gradual. It is possible that the effectiveness of these approaches relates to the outcomes being measured (for example, 'big bang' approaches could lead to speedier desegregation (presence), but greater participation/long-term mainstream ownership may be achieved through a more gradual process of change)

The case studies also identified a wide range of barriers that needed to be overcome. The challenges appeared to be greatest in Area B, which was seeking to develop inclusion in a context where there was weak political support, a strong traditional special school culture, and limited 'central capacity'/financial resources to help achieve change. This range of barriers suggest that local authorities may not be in a similar starting position when it comes to applying the kinds of levers that Ainscow & Tweddle describe.

In all the case study authorities, there was commitment at <u>some</u> level to moving in a more inclusive direction. The Croll & Moses model would imply that, where there was little impact on segregation levels, this commitment was just not strong enough or at a senior enough level. The case study findings suggest that the reality may not be so 'all or nothing' and that a more interactive model may be required, which balances personal commitment and capacity against a range of local and national contextual conditions.

7.2.4   How are developments maintained?

Differing views were presented in the single case-study interviews as to whether 'active maintenance' was necessary, once inclusion had 'become established'. Some pointed to the history of special school closures, which had forced parents and professionals to work together to achieve successful mainstream outcomes. In their view, inclusion had also become culturally embedded and seen more broadly as 'the right thing to do'. The notion of 'inclusive culture' was identified in Areas A and C, where below average levels of segregation had been maintained for some period of time.

The CSIE statistics (1997-2001 and 2002-4) offer some support for this position. Authorities that have the lowest percentages of pupils in special schools tend to remain in this cohort, with little change over time. The more significant changes occur in the middle to high segregation group, where reductions in some authorities are matched by increases in others.

However, the single case-study also suggests that maintenance is achieved by the ongoing commitment of a small number of 'core' personnel, who use a range of approaches to reinforce and extend their 'inclusion achievements'. Reference was made in section 6.7 (above) to 'scripts and stories' and other types of 'collective memory'

(Bellah et al, cit Ainscow & Tweddle 2003), which contribute to maintaining group cohesion and defending against potential threats.

Another aspect of the development and maintenance of inclusion appeared to be the building of alliances and the strengthening/extension of 'supportive constituencies'. In the DfEE/NASEN case studies, SEN support services were seen as a particular group who needed to 'be on board'. In the single case-study, attempts were also being made to reinforce the connection between school quality and inclusion, by securing greater engagement from the Authority's school improvement service.

7.2.5   What is the contribution of SEN support services?

The case study findings suggest that SEN support services tended to play a 'mediating' rather than direct causative role in the development of inclusion. This may relate to the fact that service practitioners do not typically have high status (compared with head teachers) and have to rely on persuasion and personal influence, leading to change that is gradual and achieved over time. The world presented by support service managers in the single case-study tended to involve imperfection and compromise, which contrasted with the more political account given by some other respondents.

The findings did not generally support Vislie's suggestion (2003: see section 2.3.9 above) that services acted as a barrier to inclusion through importing practices from the 'special education discourse' into the mainstream school context. Rather, the evidence suggested that support services were seeking to renegotiate and 'reframe' schools' conceptualisations of special educational need and their expectations of support service roles, so that these were more consistent with inclusive practice.

The quantitative data showed that senior local authority officers/managers saw impact on inclusion as an important indicator of support service effectiveness. The case study findings, particularly from the three local authorities sampled in the DfEE/NASEN research, confirmed this view. In Area A, they were described as the Authority's '*shock troops*' for inclusion, and, in Area B, the senior officer placed a strong emphasis on securing support service cohesion around a shared agenda for development. The senior officer in the single-case study emphasised the professional contribution of support services in helping ensure that the Authority's political objectives were delivered.

There was evidence in the single case-study and in Area A of both advocacy/challenge and enabling/supportive roles. It was not always easy to ensure an appropriate balance between these. There were similar tensions in practice between the 'idealised' role of providing advice to willing adult recipients and the need to provide direct support to individual pupils to secure school ownership, reassure parents or establish credibility.

Head teachers interviewed in the three DfEE/NASEN case study authorities tended to be negative about support services' aspirations to have a school development role and wanted them to be more focused on individual pupil issues/concerns. This was consistent with the quantitative data, where officers estimated that schools would give a low rating to 'school development' as a measure of support service effectiveness.

There was insufficient evidence from the case study interviews to judge how far head teachers welcomed the contribution made by support services to the development of inclusion. However, some support service managers and practitioners identified a conflict of agendas in this area as well. This was consistent with the significant gap found in the national survey between the mean estimated ratings given for inclusion by schools and managers/support services themselves. This is likely to be a particular issue in 'higher segregating' authorities where estimated school ratings of the importance of inclusion as a criterion for judging support service effectiveness tended to be low.

Tensions between the roles and contributions expected by managers/support services and by schools were leading to some ambivalence about the desirability of delegating support service funding. The senior officer (and mainstream head teacher) interviewed in Area B felt that this would lead to considerable loss of 'central capacity' which would be needed to 'kickstart' and support change. On the other hand, the funding of support services in Area C had already been substantially delegated and this was seen by some to be entirely consistent with a 'school-led'/'school-owned' system. Others felt that a commercially-orientated, 'market-led' support service ran the risks of promoting over-dependence on external inputs, rather than building schools' own internal capacity for inclusive practice.

In the single case-study Authority, there had been a build-up over time of a substantial central capacity which had helped promote and support the development of inclusion. However, a point had been reached where the existence of a substantial external service

was seen as limiting progression to greater school ownership. Delegating a significant proportion of support service funding was regarded as a 'logical next step', which reinforced the inclusive principles that had already been established.

7.3   Towards a model of local authority influence

In this section, a conceptual model is proposed, which offers a way of understanding the local authority contribution to developing inclusion, drawing together findings from all three data sources. This differs from the model proposed by Croll & Moses in their overview report of their ESRC-funded study (personal communication) and from that suggested by Ainscow (2005).

The Croll & Moses model pits the personal will and commitment of senior local authority individuals on the one hand against the features of the 'local policy environment' (parent/school attitudes; interest groups etc). There is a place in their model for national influences (statutory government processes, legislation and guidance; and broader educational ideas and values). However, in an ambivalent national policy environment, outcomes are likely to be more locally determined.

The model proposed by Ainscow et al sees the development of inclusion in schools as being influenced by a broader range of sources: community attitudes; principles and values; local authority 'levers'; and 'forms of evaluation' (typically imposed by central government through inspection regimes).

The model proposed in this research is more complex and interactive (see Figure 4 below). It recognises the important role of key local individuals ('change agents') in instigating and bringing about change. It incorporates the concept of 'levers' or actions taken by these individuals to support inclusive developments. However it also emphasises the importance of contextual conditions (both national and local) that can serve as 'enablers' or 'barriers' to change. These conditions are not all fixed: some are amenable to change through the actions of change agents. However, they can also be affected by other influences such as changes to the national/local policy environment that are beyond the change agent's control. The nature of these conditions can have a reciprocal influence on the behaviour of change agents, potentially limiting the actions they can successfully undertake or accelerating progress to the desired outcomes.

It is suggested that the most common 'trajectory' for change is a more indirect one (highlighted in green), with change agents acting on the contextual conditions to create a more positive climate for inclusion to develop[59]. The single case-study involved a more direct relationship between actions and outcomes (through the more radical decision to close special schools and move pupils to mainstream sites). This is the kind of situation that Croll & Moses regard as a genuine example of 'reform' (though they consider this type of trajectory to be relatively rare). The model suggested below is more 'inclusive' in that it attempts (like Ainscow et al) to plot a common journey, while recognising the realities of a changing national and local policy environment (which can have a significant effect on what is possible, even for the most committed change agent).

Figure 4:   A conceptual model for understanding the contribution of local authorities to the development of inclusion
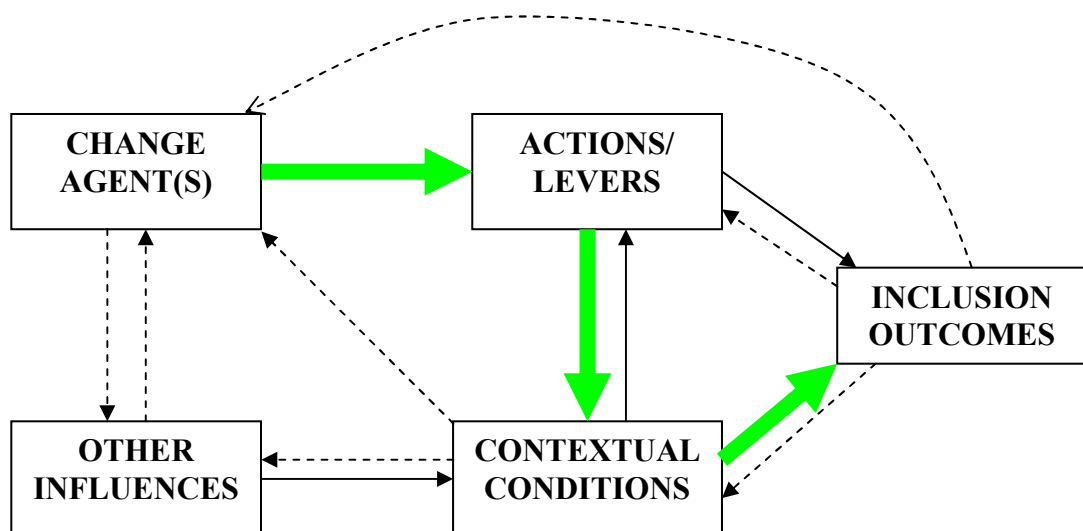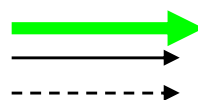
To see how this model works in practice, each 'cell' in the diagram will be considered in turn.

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[59] This is particularly the case in a broader policy context where local authorities have more limited direct control over outcomes

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Change agent(s): These are typically people within the local authority organisation who take on a leadership role in instigating and sustaining change. They could be senior officers (as in the DfEE/NASEN case studies) or local politicians (as in the single case). Relevant attributes include beliefs and commitment; skills; and power. Beliefs and commitment could derive from a number of sources: *personal experience* (for example, as parent or relative of a disabled person; or negative experience of the 'status quo', as occurred in the single-case study); *role* (for example, the discomfort experienced by educational psychologists as 'educational undertakers' (Sheppard 1976) when children are being placed outside the mainstream school system); or as a *response to an unrealistic level of demand* (which tends to be considerable in authorities with a high number of pupils in special provision). Skills include both strategic and interpersonal resources, as well as a capacity to sustain energy and direction. Power is usually formal and linked to status/'authority'. However, it can also be gained through the exercise of other forms of influence (e.g. informational, political, strategic – as in the single-case study authority; or through promotion to a senior role).

Change agents may initially be isolated individuals, for example, appointed to a senior position from another Authority, with a desire to change the status quo. However, an early strategy may be to draw together a 'supportive constituency', if possible through the appointment of like-minded people (as in Area A) or by building local alliances. Additional change agents may also be brought in from outside (such as external consultants) who are accorded a position of power and influence in order to support or validate change.

Actions/levers: There are a range of levers available to change agents to help influence change. They might include actions that are:

(i)   *structural* (e.g.reorganising support services to promote greater cohesion/a common agenda)

(ii)   *strategic* (e.g. developing funding approaches that help reinforce mainstream school responsibilities; or locally redefining concepts and measures of school quality)

(iii)   *political* (e.g. developing formal inclusion policies and securing broader political approval); or

(iv)   *interpersonal* (e.g. communicating with schools and others in a way that is effective in 'selling the vision'[60])

A key issue for change agents is the choice (and timing) of actions/levers that are most likely to have an impact on the desired outcomes, given the <u>contextual conditions</u> that form the necessary background to change.

Contextual conditions: The case study findings suggest a wide range of factors that can be enabling or barriers to change. Some of these are relatively fixed (eg population density). However, others are more amenable to change. The 'power' of these conditions will depend on the particular context of the Authority. For example, special schools may generally be apprehensive about the prospects of increased inclusion. In some authorities, they may generate considerable resistance to change. In other authorities, schools may adopt a more progressive view. In both contexts, the skills and actions of change agents are likely to have some effect on the ways in which head teachers respond. However, differences in context will present different levels of 'challenge'.

In the model, there is the potential for a two-way transactional relationship between the actions of change agents and contextual conditions. Thus contextual conditions may limit or enhance initial 'action possibilities'. But they can also be changed by actions (positively or unintentionally negatively) in a way that opens up new options (or makes things more difficult). The notion of 'critical events', that emerged in the single case-study, provides an example of this kind of transaction.

Other influences: This cell offers a route for understanding how contextual conditions can be altered by other causes than the actions of change agents. They might include:
(i)   *changes in national policy*
(for example, a central government decision to further enhance parental 'choice' of provision, which might strengthen the 'power' of parents who disagree with a local policy of inclusion)

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[60] This also links to the use of language as a 'tactic' of influence (see Fulcher 1989 for a more detailed discussion)

(ii)   *changes in local policy and strategic priorities*

(for example, a greater priority given to meeting attainment target thresholds because of 'poor local authority performance'; or the need to revisit the option of residential special schooling to help manage demand for admission of looked after children to more expensive forms of residential care)

(iii)   *'serendipitous changes'*

(for example, opportunities/new barriers associated with personnel changes, or changes to the condition of special schools such as deterioration in buildings or positive/negative inspection reports)

Inclusion outcomes: Although this element might seem relatively straightforward, local authorities can have significant internal issues in deciding how such outcomes are defined. As already discussed in chapter 2, the broadening of the use of the term and the potential for differing definitions and understandings at both national and local level may be seen as a 'negative contextual condition' that needs to be overcome. Ainscow et al (2000) see this as a major issue that needs to be resolved before effective change can be considered. In the current model, as a minimum, the change agent needs to be clear about the critical dimensions by which progress is going to be judged.

The model includes a number of weaker connections (shown with dotted lines). These reflect the possibility for change agents to be reinforced by positive changes to contextual conditions and negatively affected, frustrated, or demotivated by unrealised ambitions or ongoing unresolved barriers. There is also the potential for positive and negative local experience to affect the broader local and national policy environment, which can lead to changes in the nature and impact of 'other influences'.

There is no specific reference in the model to how change is maintained. However, this can be conceived in a number of different ways, for example:

(i)   the strengthening of the 'supportive constituency' may mean that change is no longer so dependent on individual agents (this cell now has more 'power')

(ii)   contextual conditions may have significantly improved (as a result of actions and other influences), so that change can move ahead 'under its own steam'

(iii)   there may be a need for more active maintenance if outcomes are less firmly
        established, or if there are new negative influences/barriers or a gradual erosion
        of the 'power' of enabling factors, through lack of awareness/reinforcement[61]

7.4 Generalisation and theories of organisational change

The conceptual model outlined above does not explain or predict how individual local
authorities develop in practice. Nor does it attempt to identify types of trajectory that
could be generalised beyond the research sample. However, it seeks to provide a
common reference point against which experience in different authorities can be
understood. In this respect, it offers a broader theoretical interpretation of the current
findings than case study research coming from a more phenomenological tradition,
where it would be sufficient to describe 'situated reality' and leave readers to make any
broader connections themselves.

In drawing connections between the model and general theory, reference can be made to
the literature on organisational change. In this field of study, Burnes (2000) identifies
two theoretical traditions: one that sees change as rational and planned; the other, as
emergent and reactive. He cites Whittington (1993) who distinguishes between four
broad approaches:

(i) _classical_: a rational approach that sets out long-term and short-term objectives and
maps out processes by which change will be achieved

(ii) _evolutionary_: a rejection of the classical approach, which argues that change is
about successful adaptation to a changing environment, requiring a high degree of
'system flexibility' and, in some cases, 'luck'; plans are necessarily short-term

(iii) '_processual_':   a variant of the evolutionary approach that sees change as a
compromise/balance between the needs of the external 'market' and the interests and
objectives of different elements or individuals within the organisation

(iv) _systemic_: a variant of the rational approach that can involve longer-term planning
but depends on a sophisticated analysis of current and future contextual conditions,
which could include 'national characteristics', 'sector practices/norms', the 'business
environment' and 'organisational characteristics'.

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[61] In the author's experience, this can happen, sometimes after a period of time, when initial change
agents 'move on' (leave/retire).

The conceptual model proposed in the current research can be linked to the 'systemic tradition'. It suggests that change agents need to have a good understanding of the specific conditions that characterise their own particular context, to help them choose (and sequence) the actions/levers they will need in order to achieve more inclusive outcomes (as these are defined). Some of these conditions may be more general and predictable, and susceptible to learning across different local authority contexts. Others have more specific 'situated meanings', for which generalised theories/approaches are less appropriate.

The model highlights the need for change agents to think and act strategically. This links to theories of leadership and, most closely, to the work of Luke (1997). He argues that the prevailing more complex governance environment requires the application of 'catalytic leadership' with '*individuals who, among other things, are able to think and work strategically and have interpersonal and communication skills that enable them to engage others in productive collaborations*'.

It also supports the assertion by Ferguson et al (2003) that *'successful change efforts must address all levels of the system: community, district, schools, classroom and students'*[62].

One of the issues reported by local authority respondents in the case study interviews was the impact of external influences over which they felt they had very little control. For example, the government's emphasis on the 'standards' agenda and its associated technology (league tables and inspection regimes) was seen to affect the priority that schools felt able to give to inclusion 'on the ground'. For 'strategic change agents', some of these influences were relatively unpredictable, particularly those operating at the national level.

 In understanding some of these broader policy influences, it is useful to consider the analytical policy framework suggested by Hodgson & Spours (2006). This framework comprises four inter-related dimensions:

(i) *political eras*:   for example, the era of 'neo-liberalism' (which the authors see as crossing the boundary between Thatcherism and New Labour)

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[62] One could also add the national level here

(ii) *the 'education state':* the increasingly broad range of national, regional and local structures/institutions that have power and influence in the policy process

(iii) *the policy process:* the 'dynamic and messy' nature of policy-making from its inception to its implementation (which may allow practitioners to subvert/distort central government policy intentions: see Bowe et al 1992)

(iv) *political 'space':* the opportunity for policy to be debated and influenced by a broader set of stakeholders (for example, during the early stages of policy creation, at times when there is open consultation, or at points of evaluation/review)

For local authorities seeking to influence levels of educational inclusion, it is important to understand the national policy landscape, in terms of trends in central government thinking and the degree of space there is available for individual local authorities to determine their own destiny. In the following section, three broader areas of policy influence are examined in more detail. These are:

(i)   the relationship between local and national government

(ii)   the degree and extent of impact arising from increasing parental choice; and

(iii)   the future of 'inclusion' as a unitary and identifiable area for policy development, policy implementation and research.

7.5   Broader policy influences

7.5.1   The relationship between local and national government

This issue can best be expressed in the form of a question: 'What degree of autonomy can local authorities expect to have in the way they develop inclusion in their area ?' At the beginning of the new millennium, Croll & Moses (2000b) suggested that, with weak/ ambivalent central government policy on inclusion, there was considerable discretion at local level (although officers/politicians might have to contend with negative aspects of the local policy environment – e.g. school/parent resistance).

However, those interviewed in the current case studies generally saw national policy as having some influence (mixed, but on balance unhelpful). This influence was mainly indirect. For example, they pointed to the inconsistency between the relatively weak encouragement of inclusion and other harder-edged policies that had greater priority and pointed in a conflicting direction (see also Loxley & Thomas 2001).

The negative view of central government influence also partly reflected a sense of 'powerlessness': a concern that a government that had centralised power/removed power from the local authority level was not taking a clearer lead.

7.5.1.1 Historical context

In this respect, it is important to understand the historical context of local-national government relations in England. Cochrane (2000) identifies three phases. In the period immediately following the Second World War, relationships were comparatively settled with established mechanisms for dialogue between officers and politicians at different government levels. There was a strong reliance on the role of professionals, linked to different areas of public service (Education; Housing; Planning etc), and their views were relatively well accepted. The reorganisation of local authorities in 1974 into larger units (such as Humberside, Cleveland and Avon) represented the reification of the place of local authorities in a modernised and efficient dual government system.

Cochrane refers to the next phase as the 'era of marketisation', with its roots in the election of a 'New Right' government under Margaret Thatcher. Keating (1993) provides the following overview:

> *'the political polarisation of the 1980s…pitted Labour-controlled local governments against a centralising Conservative Government. The Thatcherite government after 1979 was committed to reducing the scope of public services, cutting public expenditure, deregulation, privatisation and a scaling down of planning. Since local government had developed in the postwar era as an agent of planning and public services provision, this implied a radical change in its role. The Thatcherite government was also intolerant of opposition and independent institutions, whether local government, trade unions or universities, which might nurture such opposition. Local councils were seen not as the basis of local self-government but as entrenched interests promoting collectivist values. On the other side of the fence, the 1980s saw the rise of a new generation of left-wing Labour councils, sometimes referred to as the 'new urban left', committed to expanding the role of local government, politicising it and not shirking from open conflict with central government. The result was a series of confrontations and a succession of legislative changes as central government sought to reduce local governments to its will. Between 1980 and 1990, some forty pieces of legislation on local government were passed'* (p120)

King (1987) refers to the developing political strategy of blaming local authorities and the public sector for any perceived deficiencies in service delivery:

'New Right politicians, including members of the Thatcher government, have successfully emphasised consumption issues such as education, health care, social services and housing. Their emphasis has been to denigrate public provision of such goods and services in favour of competitive market-based production. New Right politicians have created, or at least exploited, public dissatisfaction with the capacity of the state to meet these consumption needs. (In their view)…because of the absence of competition and choice, these services are inferior and forfeit customer sovereignty' (p179)

These views were consistent with the arguments of some contemporary academic theorists. For example, Niskanen (1971) had started to challenge the view that the public sector was necessarily motivated by the public good. Public sector organisations could be characterised as 'bureaucracies' that were self-interested, inefficient and unresponsive to the needs of the people they were supposed to serve. Similar doubts had started to be raised about the motives of 'professionals' who were now seen as seeking to maintain their status and power through the monopolisation of the market, preserving professional autonomy and freedom from external control (Johnson 1972).

The negative political presentation of the public sector helped to justify the promotion of private sector alternatives, and fitted the mood of the electorate who, in the late 1970s, had experienced a series of public sector strikes and a level of trade union power that they perceived to be excessive. However, as Goodin (1985) argued, it also underestimated the positive aspects of the 'public sector ethos' and gave little credit to professionals working in the public sector because of their moral and political values[63].

Cochrane's third phase is the 'era of managerialism', that has characterised more recent developments and which is reflected in the new democratic structures and forms of accountability associated with local government 'modernisation' and reform.

Some commentators (eg Stoker 2004; Morphet 2008) have argued that public service reform over the last decade has brought considerable improvements in local authority efficiency and a more appropriate role as an 'enabler' rather than a direct provider of services. Stewart (2003) considered that the new priority to identify the needs and perspectives of local service users (and broker services for them) would help revitalise local accountability and democracy in a context that was previously dominated by

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[63] Whitfield (2001) has pointed out that the political argument did not acknowledge the possibility of private bureaucracies, which could be characterised by a much higher level of (financial) self-interest. He also argues that there are some good reasons for 'bureaucratic activity' (for example, to ensure 'due process' and the fulfilment of statutory obligations).

service providers and professional power. Morphet (op.cit) points to the new local authority coordinating role involved in the operation of Children's Trusts, and the arguments put forward in the Lyons review (2007) for a new 'localism'.

Others are more sceptical. For example, Davies (2008) recognises the ongoing desire of the New Labour government to achieve greater localism (linked to their concern to counteract alienation/abstention from the political process). He identifies three attempts to deliver on this agenda, which in his view have done little to shift the balance of power to the local level. He suggests several reasons for this 'inertia'. These include:

(i)   an ongoing 'elite contempt' and distrust of local government from national government bodies and agencies

(ii)   the fact that centralisation is an inevitable by-product of marketisation (central managerial control is needed to prevent a return to post-war welfarism, deal with the negative consequences of deregulation and ensure financial efficiency)

(iii)   a 'dependency culture' that has been part of the legacy of years of centralisation and national government micro-management, from which it is difficult for local authorities to 'break free'.

Davies picks up a theme in the Lyons review that identifies the need to restore some sense of local authority 'powerfulness'. If this is not supported by a more radical shift of power from central to local government, then it will require 'institutional entrepreneurs' at individual local authority level to 'subvert the rules' and show what is possible.

Laffin (2008) reviews a range of evaluation studies relating to the local government modernisation agenda (particularly the introduction of Local Public Service and Local Area Agreements) and similarly concludes that such central measures (introduced to support greater local initiative) are inhibiting progress. In his view, the key centralising influences are a continuing national government distrust of local authority autonomy and the ongoing effects of specific demands from individual and separate Government Departments.

Laffin (2009) also points to the complexities in relationships that have been introduced by the development of a mixed stakeholder economy, with a range of other interests that

can now have an influence on policy at national and local level, including the private and voluntary sector.

So what about the potential for influence from 'bottom-up' community action (as happened in the single case-study authority in the early 1980s)? To enhance democratic activity, the Labour government has introduced a range of new requirements on local authorities to increase public participation as part of their 'community leadership' role. These provide a number of opportunities for influence by participating stakeholders. However, a key issue is the extent to which these can be seen as representative of their local community as opposed to presenting/lobbying for their own particular individual interests. In this respect, 'stakeholder participation' may be contrasted from the 'community politics' movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Hain 1976) which was seen as a vehicle for achieving broader and more radical community influence at a time when local government was seen as 'conservative and reactionary'[64].

7.5.1.2 Implications for the development of inclusion

So what are the implications of the above analysis for local authorities seeking to develop inclusion? Firstly, because of the overall climate and legacy of centralisation, it is reasonable to expect that some senior officers (and schools) will doubt whether locally-initiated change is legitimate and permissible. As Davies (op.cit) argues, this may imply a need for more local 'entrepreneurial empowering'.

Secondly, it is reasonable to expect that the national agenda on inclusion will continue to show ambivalence. Although David Blunkett was brave enough to set targets for the reduction of permanent exclusions, these proved unpopular with schools and some Authorities and, following negative media coverage, they were soon abandoned[65]. Responding to recent challenges from the Tory leader and the House of Commons Select Committee, the Government Minister indicated that no reduction in the percentage of children attending special schools was currently envisaged. Ongoing ambivalence may also reflect the limited popularity of inclusion as an electoral issue,

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[64] A softer version of this agenda was presented by Lishman (1976) who argued for a parallel system of community action and representative democracy, with dialogues involving '*a delicate and continuing balance, usually based on argument and reassessment, between compromise and obstinacy*'

[65] The current Secretary of State for Education has introduced legislation for secondary schools to work together as 'behaviour collaboratives', to promote a sense of 'collective responsibility' for pupils permanently excluded (or at risk of exclusion). However, this is partly linked to a desire for enhanced school management of alternative provision (and greater control over access) as part of a tradition of increasing school autonomy and diminishing public sector 'provision control'.

and the unwillingness of central government to deal with local diversity when there are powerful local interest groups set on preserving the status quo[66].

Thirdly, the canvas of modern local government is now so broad that it is uncertain how far the development of inclusion would be a priority, even if local authorities were more powerful/self-governing. Budgetary pressures and other demands might mean that its place on the agenda would be determined by the prospect of financial savings, the strength of stakeholder demands or significant personal commitment from senior officers/politicians.

Finally, it is difficult to predict the effects of giving greater 'power' to service users. In the area of services/provision for special educational needs, this is linked to the issue of 'parental choice', which is addressed in the next section.

7.5.2 The effects of increasing parental choice

The relationship between parents and public sector services has developed over the last twenty years from a model that was largely dominated by professionals ('parental involvement') to a stronger user-driven model ('parental choice') through to more recent conceptions of parents being more actively involved in the design and evaluation of services ('co-production': see Bovaird 2007).

A number of authors (e.g. Riddell 2000) have examined the relationship between parental choice and the educational inclusion agenda. For example, there is the question of whether parental choice includes the right to choose special school provision as opposed to mainstream, where inclusion remains a broader social and political goal. And, for parents exercising their new right to choose the mainstream option (even for a child with multiple/complex learning disabilities), how far does this 'choice' include an entitlement to high quality mainstream provision, or equally good provision in all mainstream schools[67]?

Riddell (2000) has argued that inclusion and parental choice under New Labour are in fact 'competing political goals'. They represent an ongoing conflict between a collective

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[66] A parallel could be drawn here with the maintenance of grammar schools in some local authority areas.
[67] CSIE (2009) for example have argued that mainstream is not really a 'choice' for parents where clearer quality expectations and school accountabilities are not yet in place.

'communitarian' emphasis (linked to concepts of 'social capital'[68]) and models of individual consumerism and an ongoing commitment to the marketisation of public sector services and provision. Some other commentators (eg Finlayson 2003) have argued that the growing emphasis on individual consumerism has started to overtake New Labour's more communitarian (social democratic) aspirations.

7.5.2.1 The advent of 'consumerism'

'Consumerism' as a concept is not new. Hilton (2003) tracks its history across various periods of the 20th Century. His account links the early stages of consumer activism with the development of the Co-operative movement and the beginnings of socialism in England. This merged into a more 'liberalist' tradition, with a desire to free both the state and the individual from the 'stranglehold' of big business and trade unions. The emphasis in the 1960s and 70s, linked to the Fabian movement and its 'think-tank', PEP (Political and Economic Planning), was on 'collective empowerment' (even in the area of material consumption, as exemplified by the early days of 'Which?' magazine (McKechnie, cit Hilton 2003)).

The latter phase of the development of consumerism has been marked by the move towards a stronger emphasis on the 'individual' (Stalker 1995). Clarke (2007) links this to the growth and extension of material affluence. He quotes the Office of Public Services Reform:

> *'The challenges and demands on today's public services are very different from those post-war years. The rationing culture which survived after the war, in treating everyone the same, often overlooked individuals' different needs and aspirations…Rising living standards, a more diverse society and a steadily stronger consumer culture have brought…expectations of greater choice, responsiveness, accessibility and flexibility'*

Within the current research, this trend was picked up in the single case-study. The 'old parents' group, who had played a significant role in the development of inclusion in their Authority, tended to emphasise their collective responsibility (on behalf of the local community) to strengthen the 'human rights' of disabled children. The 'new parents' had a more differentiated view of inclusion. They had 'higher expectations' of the mainstream option and wanted a 'choice of mainstream school' as well as the power

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[68] See Putnam (2000); Bourdieu (1986)

to choose special school provision if needed. They also argued that the inclusion of their child might be threatened by the inclusion of others.

The broader research literature suggests that 'consumer choice' is not as straightforward an issue as politicians tend to present it. Gabriel & Lang (1995) for example point to the different 'faces' of the consumer: some powerful and controlling; others as the easy objects of commercial manipulation. Within the field of education, Crozier (1998) argues that the relationship between parents and schools can best be described as '*mutual surveillance*', with the parental consumer role being balanced by schools' involvement in 'social regulation' of parents and families (for example, through child protection and non-attendance procedures).

Clarke (2007), in his recent study of 'changing relationships and identifications' in a sample of English public services, identified three sets of issues, which he describes as follows :

(i)   *rights, resources and rationing*:
Local authorities have to manage limited resources and seek to distribute these equitably. The enhanced right of individual consumer 'choice' is seen as having:

> *'a rather unpredictable and disruptive quality in relation to principles of public service that have framed processes of priority setting and rationing hitherto'*

with the risk that this would involve:

> *'a 'pre-emptive' claim on a limited budget – pre-emptive both in terms of committing scarce resources, and in terms of taking one decision about resource allocation out of the <u>collective</u> consideration of claims and resources that the organisation saw as its proper responsibility'*

(ii)   *choice, voice and exit*:
There is increased recognition of the need to listen to 'user voices'. However, public sector organisations still have to decide how to '*weigh, judge and evaluate*' these. There were concerns that the 'voice' of particularly articulate, well-resourced and demanding users could distort the shape and form of services and provision required, especially as they had more capacity to 'exit' the system, leaving the public sector less well-funded, residual and marginalised (see also Cooke & Kothari 2001).

(iii)   *the 'knowledge/power' knot:*

Public sector organisations recognise the need for professionals to be more open and accountable. However, the professional-consumer relationship is not simple:

> *'Members of the public want (or need) experts: they want expertise applied in the solutions of their problems. But they also want to be able to challenge the exercise of such expertise – when it is perceived to be oppressive or (sometimes) when it does not deliver the desired outcome. Public service organisations want knowledgeable, self-directing users of services – but they want those users to be both responsible and reasonable. They also want (or need?) to reserve some decisions to themselves – the capacity to articulate the public interest in relation to individual wants'*

Clarke concludes that new governmental expectations of stronger consumer influence present the public sector with a number of issues and dilemmas that are needing to be resolved:

> *'The picture emerging….is not that of an 'implementation gap' between policy and practice, nor is it a matter of recalcitrant, foot-dragging organisations who have to be made to face up to the 'citizen-consumer'. Rather, we are seeing organisations which know that their relationships with the public are unsettled and uncertain; who are striving to find new ways of engagement and involvement; but who are discovering that such shifts throw up new tensions, problems and dilemmas.'*   (pp173-4)

7.5.2.2 Implications for the development of inclusion

A number of issues arise from the analysis above. Firstly, what is the degree of 'power' that inclusion retains as a social justice enterprise, in a climate which has become increasingly 'de-politicised' (Needham 2003) and where 'collective ideals' are subsidiary to individual self-interest ?

Secondly, what are the constraints on parent/consumer 'choice' with regard to provision and services for children with special educational needs and disabilities? Some types of provision (for example, for pupils with behavioural difficulties) are linked at both national and local level with 'social regulation'. Are parents of these pupils likely to have a similar range of choices? With increasing budgetary pressures, there will be an even greater need for local authorities to manage demand[69]. It will be costly to retain a

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[69] This was rated highly by senior officers/managers in the DfEE/NASEN national survey as a criterion for judging SEN support service effectiveness.

full range of provision options (special and mainstream) to allow for individual choice. And there is some evidence already (see Meijer 1999) that allocating SEN budgets direct to parents (as in Austria and in the Dutch 'rucksack' model) leads to increased overall expense.

Thirdly, are there likely to be similar levels of choice for <u>all</u> ? In the world of SEN and inclusion, there may well be conflicts between different consumers (for example, between the interests of parents of children with SEN/disabilities themselves, on the one hand, and those of the broader parent community).

Finally, in involving users more actively in the development and review of services, whose 'voice' is being heard? Riddell (2008) refers to potential discrepancies between the views of parents and young people with disabilities themselves. And there may also be differences between the experience of individual parents and the public presentation of these by voluntary organisations. A recent study, for example, by Parsons et al (2009) found that parents of children with ASD (autistic spectrum disorders) are no more or less dissatisfied with the educational provision being made for them than parents of other disability groups. This contrasts with the reality presented by national ASD voluntary organisations to the DCSF and the House of Commons Select Committee, which has led to this group being accorded particular priority in legislative and funding developments.

7.5.3   The future of 'inclusion'

Reference was made in Chapter 2 of this thesis to the broadening definition of inclusion and the possibility that the concept had 'outlived its usefulness'. It is difficult to predict whether it will continue to survive at broader policy level. For example, if a Tory government is elected, it may wish to distance itself from any commitment to a concept that the Tory leader has already publicly criticised.

Even if there is political continuity, there is increasing evidence of attempts to resolve some of tensions and dilemmas inherent in the concept by replacing it with more 'consensual' terms (for example, 'individualisation' and 'personalised learning': see Vislie (2005) for comparable developments in Norway).

The view I have taken in this thesis and elsewhere (Norwich & Gray 2007) is that these are 'false resolutions'. It would be better for politicians, practitioners and researchers to be clearer about the different dimensions that inclusion involves and to try and agree the desired direction for each of these. As Norwich has argued (2008), it is important to recognise the dilemmas associated with each of these dimensions, at national, local and school level, and to discuss more openly and collectively how they can best be resolved.

This requires less of an emphasis on 'leadership' and 'vision' and a greater recognition that, in a complex policy environment, managerial activity is inevitably '*human and troubled*' (Knights & Wilmott 1999).

7.6   Reflections
7.6.1   Future research possibilities

There is a range of research possibilities suggested by the conceptual model outlined in section 7.3. This could be tested out in a number of ways. At an overall level, it could be applied to a broader set of case studies, including local authorities with stable or increasing percentages of pupils in special schools. It could also be used to explore the nature of local authority contribution further through focus group discussions with officers and others from other authorities with decreasing segregation trends.

Validity issues arising from retrospective research could be addressed through use of a longitudinal case study, with change evaluated contemporaneously over a period of time.

Alternative sampling approaches could be adopted, using 'critical' or 'deviant' cases (Flyvbjerg op cit), for example, focusing on the authorities that were 'outliers' in the quantitative analyses of the DfEE/NASEN ratings and CSIE segregation data (Figures 2 and 3: chapter 4).

Future research could also focus on specific elements and relationships within the broader conceptual model. For example, there could be further investigation of the factors that motivated change agents to seek improvements in local authority 'inclusion performance'. The relationship between actions and outcomes/contextual conditions

could be further assessed through a more detailed examination of actions and levers used in different authorities and the evidence of their effectiveness.

The 'predictive power' of different contextual conditions could be examined in a number of ways, for example through further case studies or, statistically, through a multiple regression analysis of the relationship between CSIE segregation data and a range of contextual variables (demographic, political).

In looking at 'outcomes', it would be important to extend the focus of research to include a broader range of inclusion dimensions, particularly the local authority's contribution to promoting increased pupil participation and stronger mainstream school ownership.

This is likely to require more substantial use of the <u>school</u> perspective, which was relatively limited in the current research study. It would be important to understand how schools (head teachers and staff) perceived the local authority's influence and impact, and more particularly the role and contribution of support services (through the use of direct measures rather than officer estimates).

The current research has suggested that the 'dilemmas' approach (Norwich 2008) could be usefully applied to both the national government and local authority level. Further studies could help articulate the nature of these dilemmas and test out how far they are recognised, addressed and resolved.

At a much broader level, the literature review carried out for this thesis indicates a significant dearth of research on 'local authority effectiveness' with considerable scope for 'false positives' and 'false negatives' being identified through formal inspection and evaluation regimes. With the increasing emphasis on local authority impact (particularly in relation to provision and services for vulnerable children and their families), there is a strong case for more coherent research at this level of policy and practice.

7.6.2 Methodology

The methodology used in this research has involved a number of 'balances' (see Chapter 3). On the positive side, it was possible to achieve both <u>breadth</u> (through the use of primary and secondary data) and <u>depth</u> (through 'privileged access' to political and professional protagonists in the single case-study authority). The use of an 'adaptive

theory' approach provided an opportunity for ongoing interactive links between concepts and data, as well as the incentive to access and draw on a wider range of theoretical resources.

On the negative side, the sampling approach presents some limitations to generalisation and broader understanding. Moreover, the use of secondary material meant that some of the research questions were addressed more indirectly than they would otherwise have been (particularly with regard to the use of estimated ratings in the quantitative analyses). Finally, a number of ethical issues arose from the limited application of the principle of 'informed consent', which might have been avoided if a more 'democratic' research approach had been adopted from the outset.

Since embarking on the write-up of this thesis, I have become interested in the literature on research 'co-production' (Nutley et al 2007), which attempts to bring together the perspectives of researchers and the knowledge of practitioners (Hammersley 2001) in a more equal partnership. This kind of approach may be particularly useful where relationships are relatively consensual, for example where understanding issues and evaluating outcomes is an acceptable joint enterprise. However, as Nutley et al (2007) point out, there are other traditions and 'stances' within public policy research which are more critical or challenging of existing paradigms, sets of values or uses of power (eg Ball, Ozga ops cit). In these cases, it is more difficult to see how a democratic co-productive approach would be viable.

7.6.3   Research, consultancy and research utilisation

This research has a number of potential applications and uses, for me personally, for the broader academic community, and for policy-makers/practitioners.

As a researcher and a consultant working on a regular basis with local authorities on SEN and inclusion issues, I have learned much from undertaking this thesis. As indicated in Chapter 1, there has been a risk throughout the process of 'cross-transfer' between these two different sources of knowledge. However, in some ways, the strongest benefits to me from the research derive from having this dual role. In a sense, the process of might be characterised as having a strong element of 'internal co-production', with checks on research and consultancy assumptions working in both directions.

Examples of 'consultancy challenge' to my researcher orientation would include the need to recognise a broad and complex set of contextual conditions that influence and limit local authority contributions. My consultancy and local authority background also 'challenged' me to address a level of influence that has not been particularly popular or well explored within the established educational research community.

Examples of 'research challenge' to my consultancy expectations would include the finding that SEN support services had a less direct influence on the development of inclusion than had been envisaged at the outset of this research[70]. The opportunity for academic reading and study of a broad range of literature has also challenged a number of my assumptions and added significantly to the conceptual resources I can apply to my consultancy activity.

Hopefully, the research will add something to the existing 'academic capital', both in terms of conceptual development and the availability of 'deep' examples of policy in practice. A number of potential publications can be identified, although these would need to take account of ethical/confidentiality issues. Examples would include a presentation of the conceptual framework outlined in this chapter, as well as the application of the 'dilemmas' approach to the local authority/national government level. There would also be scope for further discussion of the relationship between SEN policy and practice and the developing trends towards individual consumerism and 'parental choice', as well as an application of the literature on central-local government relations to the SEN policy area. From a personal point of view, I would also be interested in producing a specific article around the consultant-researcher relationship.

Finally, the research has potential application at policy level. The relationship between research and policy is a complex one. There has tended to be an assumption that 'quality speaks for itself' or that influence is simply a matter of effective dissemination. In their overview of this area, Nutley et al (2007) trace developments from the aspirations of the immediate post-war period for policy to be based on/informed by social science, through a period of disillusionment and frustration about the lack of connection in the 1970s and 80s (Finch 1986; Tizard 1991) to the New Labour call for 'evidence-based

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[70] This expectation was based on direct experience as a senior officer where SEN support services had played a significant role in the development and implementation of the Authority's inclusion policy

practice'. They argue that the key issue is to understand why influence is variable, why it succeeds when it does, and why/when uptake is limited.

A number of 'improvements' have been suggested to help strengthen the relationship. These include more opportunistic exploitation of periods of 'policy space' (Hodgson & Spours op.cit), a stronger two-way (co-productive) flow between researchers and policy-makers (as is already the case in some areas of the humanities and social sciences (such as law and economics) – see Wilson (2008)), together with a greater recognition of the '*highly contingent and context-dependent*' nature of research use (Nutley et al 2007).

Drawing together their conclusions from the last decade of activity within the RURU (Research Unit for Research Utilisation) at Edinburgh/St Andrews Universities, Nutley et al identify some 'guiding principles' and 'helpful mechanisms' for supporting the use of research in policy and practice (pp312-3). These can be summarised as:

(i)   'translation': the work of researchers must include some consideration of how findings can be used/applied to (specific) practical contexts/target groups

(ii)   'ownership': policy-makers/practitioners are more likely to use research if they feel they have had a shared role in helping decide its focus/design

(iii)   'contextual analysis': research is more likely to have an influence if researchers have undertaken some analysis of the context for research implementation

(iv)   'credibility'; research take-up is enhanced where researchers have credibility and/or endorsement from 'opinion leaders'[71]

(v)   'support for implementation': research may have more of an impact if researchers are prepared and available to work with organisations to help apply its conclusions

There are of course other ways that organisations can develop and learn, using other forms of knowledge (experiential) than those provided by research. In the local

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[71] Nutley et al emphasise the importance of engaging with 'meso-level' decision-makers within organisations, who can have a significant influence on attitudes to the value of research/the research contribution. However, some would argue that the emphasis on 'credibility' is double-edged and can compromise the legitimate role of research to challenge. In response, Nutley et al point out that 'organisational decision-makers' can act as effective gatekeepers to the dissemination/use of research findings if the level of challenge is not welcomed.

authority context, Brannan et al (2008) have come to similar conclusions as Ainscow et al (2003) about the advantages of peer networks at a variety of levels to help ensure that 'best practice' can be evaluated and generalised.

However, a number of the principles and mechanisms outlined above also fit well with the role of the 'researcher-consultant' that I have tried to espouse in my own practice over the last 10 years. In my feedback to the single case-study Authority, I will seek to ensure that these principles are properly recognised. And, as this thesis draws to an end, I will also endeavour to ensure that my continuing involvement in both research and consultancy roles continues to draw on both sets of resources.

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APPENDIX 1:   **DfEE/NASEN survey of local authority SEN support services: Section on Service Evaluation from national questionnaire**

SECTION C: **EVALUATION OF SEN SUPPORT:**

C1:   *Which of the following statements best describe your LEA's current overall approach to SEN Support Service evaluation ? (Please circle one only)*

(a) There is a uniform and consistent approach to evaluation across all our SEN Support Services

(b) The LEA sets broad expectations and parameters but the style and specific content of service evaluation is left up to individual services/managers

(c) The nature and content of evaluation is very much a matter for individual services to decide

Comments (if any):

C2:   *Which of the following approaches to evaluation tend to be used by SEN Support Services in your LEA ? (Please circle one or more of the statements below)*

(a) Ongoing monitoring to ensure that the service is meeting its commitments (eg numbers of sessions/visits; response time)

(b) Formal feedback sought from users on a regular basis

(c) Unsolicited feedback (eg complaints; positive comments)

(d) Using information on pupil progress

If more than one of these, which approach do you personally tend to emphasise ?

Comments (if any):

C3: *When formal feedback is sought, is this typically from (please circle):*

a) Schools

b) Parents

c) Others (please specify)

C4: *In your experience, what emphasis is given to the following outcome areas, when judgements are made by schools and others in your LEA about the contribution of SEN Support Services ? Please enter numbers 1 to 5 in the boxes below (1 = minimal emphasis; 5 = very significant emphasis)*

(a) Judgements by schools:

Pupil progress ☐

Development of teacher skills ☐

Whole school development ☐

More inclusive outcomes ☐

Reduced demand for additional support/alternative provision ☐

(b) Judgements by parents:

Pupil progress ☐

Development of teacher skills ☐

Whole school development ☐

More inclusive outcomes ☐

Reduced demand for additional support/alternative provision ☐

(c) Judgements by support services themselves:

Pupil progress ☐

Development of teacher skills ☐

Whole school development ☐

More inclusive outcomes ☐

Reduced demand for additional support/alternative provision ☐

(d) Judgements by you:

Pupil progress ☐

Development of teacher skills ☐

Whole school development ☐

More inclusive outcomes ☐

Reduced demand for additional support/alternative provision ☐

C5: *Other people's expectations of SEN Support Services are not always consistent. What steps have you taken, if any, to try to ensure a more 'common agenda' between service users (schools, parents), LEA 'purchasers' and support service providers ?*

C6: *What changes, if any, are you planning to introduce to the ways in which your LEA's SEN Support Services are monitored or evaluated,*

(i) as a result of the following government initiatives ?

(a) Fair Funding (eg if your LEA has decided to retain a reduced central team):

(b) The SEN Action Programme (eg if your LEA is seeking to achieve greater levels of inclusion)

(c) Other initiatives (eg Best Value/LEA OfSTED inspections/cross-agency developments)

(ii) as a result of local deliberations:

C7: *On a broader front, what approach are you taking to monitoring mainstream schools' provision for SEN, in particular, the use of any funds delegated to them from SEN support service budgets ?*

Please attach any documentation that, in your view, describes particularly interesting evaluation approaches used in your LEA (either at whole LEA or individual service/team level) or gives helpful background to any of your responses.

Thank you for your help in completing this questionnaire.

PLEASE RETURN TO PETER GRAY AT THE ADDRESS BELOW BY FRIDAY 18TH FEBRUARY 2000 AT THE LATEST

Peter Gray
Research Officer: Rethinking Support for More Inclusive Schooling
National Association for Special Educational Needs
NASEN House
4/5 Amber Business Village
Amber Close, Amington
Tamworth B77 4RP

APPENDIX 2:   DfEE/NASEN case studies: List of interviewees:

Area A:

Principal EP/Head of AEN
SEN Adviser
AEN Finance Officer
Support Team Managers (HI/VI/PD)
HI/VI support team staff
Learning Support Teacher
BSS Manager
BSS practitioners
EP practitioners
Secondary mainstream Head
Primary Heads cluster

Area B:

Assistant Director (Pupil Support)
Principal EP
Finance Officer
Head of Education Support Service
Head of PRU
SEN casework officers
SEN adviser
EP practitioners
Support service practitioners
Mainstream nursery Head/HI team manager
Primary mainstream Head/VI team manager
Primary mainstream Head + SENCo

Area C:

Director of Education
Senior Education Officer
SEN Adviser
Principal EP
EP practitioners
Finance officer
SEN/statementing officer
BSS/PRU Head
Head of SEN Support Service
Learning Support Teacher
Head of PD support service
Head of HI support service
Members of preschool SEN support team and ASD team
Mainstream Heads (primary + secondary)
Mainstream SENCos (primary + secondary)
Special school Head

APPENDIX 3:   Single case-study: Example letter to participants:

Dear Colleague,

I am currently engaged in PhD research looking at the relative contributions of schools and external services in promoting the greater inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. This is a key strategic issue in the context of greater delegation of central LEA budgets to schools and the prevailing emphasis within the school improvement literature on internally-generated change. My research is being supervised by Professor Brahm Norwich at Exeter University.

The Director of Education has given me permission to use the Borough as a case study. The Authority interests me for a number of reasons: firstly, it has taken significant steps over the last 10 to 15 years towards more inclusive policy and provision – I would like to review (retrospectively) the key influences that have led to progress. Secondly, I am interested in the way in which inclusion has developed since the decision was made to delegate a significant proportion of SEN support service funding to schools.

I have undertaken to report the case study anonymously, with no specific reference to the LEA, individual schools or personnel. However, I have offered to provide more general feedback that may be helpful in informing the LEA's further strategic development.

I have already carried out interviews with a range of people, some no longer directly involved in the Borough but who have a historical perspective. Interviewees have so far included local authority councillors, senior officers, support service managers and staff. The next phase will involve interviews with groups of parents and staff from schools.

I would be very grateful if you were able to assist me in this research, by attending an after school focus group discussion on one of the dates indicated below. If you are interested and able to do so, could you please complete the slip attached and return it to me at the address indicated ?

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

APPENDIX 4:   Single case-study: Focus areas for interviews

(a)   Officers, professionals and Members

1.   Current role and length/nature of experience of SEN/inclusion in the Borough

2.   Your view of the Borough's achievements in relation to inclusion

Areas/aspects where you feel inclusion has not developed as far as you might have hoped

3.   Key factors that, in your view, have led to the development of inclusion in the Borough

(a) in the early days
(b) more recently

The most important factor ?

4.   How far has it been possible to *maintain* advances achieved over the years ?

What has the LEA done to ensure this ?

What have schools done ?

5.   What effects have recent developments in the structure/organisation of the Borough's LEA support services had on the further development/maintenance of inclusion ?

What is your evidence for saying this ?

6.   What about the relationship between inclusion and school improvement ? How far, in your view, do schools in this Authority see these as compatible ? What level of support and challenge do they currently require, in order to continue to develop inclusive practice, and how this is best provided ?

(b)   Parents:

1.   Introductions

2.   Your experience of inclusion in the Borough:

- what's worked well for you ?

- areas/aspects where you feel inclusion has not developed as far as you might have hoped

3.   Your views on how more inclusive practice has come about:

- what do you think have been the main influences ?

- what do you feel would help things move forward in the future ?

4.   Do you think things could ever go backwards ?

- what might lead to this happening ?

- what would stop it happening/make it less likely ?

5.   How significant do think the contribution of the Borough's support services has been to the development/maintenance of inclusion ?

- what experiences suggest to you this is the case ?

6.   Some people would say that national pressures on schools ('standards'; national curriculum) make it more difficult for them to move forward on inclusion. How far do you think this is the case ?

- any examples from your experience (either way) ?

Appendix 5: Single case-study: list of tree nodes and frequency of use

Name of node	Sources	References
1.View of inclusion	0	0
Value	0	0
positive	9	22
negative	0	0
mixed	5	14
Emphasis	0	0
Location	0	0
mainstream	10	62
access to education	3	6
within LA	2	2
Functional	11	35
normalisation	2	10
diversity	5	8
ownership	6	22
inclusive system	3	3
other	4	5
motivation	0	0
beliefs	6	8
rights	5	8
children's rights	3	7
parents' rights	1	1
higher expectations	1	3
better quality	1	2
financial	1	1
other	5	8
2. Views on change	0	0
Preferred	1	1
pace	0	0
gradualistic	3	16
accelerated	4	5
style	0	0
communication	0	0
overt	3	6
covert	0	0
relationships	0	0
collaborative	6	20
directive	4	5
planning	0	0
planned	4	8
haphazard	0	0
opportunistic	1	3
source	0	0
led by others	0	0
LA-led	3	6
school-led	1	1

Name of node				Sources	References
2. Views on change (cont.)					
Actual				1	1
	source			0	0
			school-led	0	0
			LA-led	8	31
			led by others	3	19
	pace			0	0
			accelerated	5	14
			gradualistic	2	2
	style			0	0
		communication		0	0
			covert	3	10
			overt	1	1
		relationships		0	0
			directive	7	19
			collaborative	2	2
		planning		0	0
			planned	2	2
			opportunistic	3	9
			haphazard	6	7
3. Outcomes (positive)				1	1
school				8	29
parents				3	3
children with SEN				8	22
other children				5	16
LA staff				2	5
society				4	6
VFM				1	2
national				2	2
other professionals				1	2
recruitment				2	3
4. Enabling factors				0	0
Contextual				0	0
		demography		3	5
		provision		6	9
		quality issues		3	11
		viability		1	1
		culture		1	2
		broader policy		2	4
Agents				0	0
	Local Authority			6	9
		Council members		8	35
		Officers		8	17
		Policy		8	17
		EPs		2	3
		Support services		7	14
			beliefs	5	12
			capacity to influence	5	13
			cohesion	2	4
			engagement	6	9
			skills	6	18
			activities	9	27

Name of node	Sources	References
4. Enabling factors (cont.)		
Schools	0	0
beliefs	6	12
engagement	7	9
skills	6	13
cohesion	2	5
leadership	5	16
confidence	3	7
experience	2	10
Parents	9	36
confidence	2	5
other	6	17
Communication	8	23
Policy to practice	8	27
Resources	4	7
amount of funding	4	9
shape and form	4	4
management level	3	3
value for money concerns	1	3
National influences	5	14
5. Barriers	1	1
Contextual	0	0
culture	3	3
demography	3	4
provision	6	10
mainstream	3	5
Agents	1	1
Local Authority	1	6
Council members	2	4
Officers	5	12
Policy	0	0
EPs	1	1
Support services	4	6
beliefs	2	2
capacity to influence	2	4
skills	4	5
cohesion	2	2
engagement	0	0
activities	5	6
Schools	4	5
skills	4	7
beliefs	6	13
engagement	7	21
power	4	5
relationships with LA	2	2
accountability	4	5
confidence	4	4
curriculum	2	4
Parents	7	12
confidence	2	6
other	5	12
children	7	13

Name of node	Sources	References
5. Barriers (cont.)		
Communication	1	1
Policy to practice	4	5
National influences	10	31
Resources	0	0
management level	4	9
shape and form	2	4
amount of funding	3	7
6. Maintaining factors	2	2
Contextual	0	0
demography	1	2
provision	2	5
culture	8	23
Agents	0	0
Local Authority	4	5
Officers	3	6
Council members	5	9
Policy	5	7
broader ownership	8	23
Support services	6	10
beliefs	4	8
organisation	2	7
actions	9	35
skills	8	18
Schools	4	4
beliefs	7	18
actions	7	15
ownership	10	39
skills	5	15
use of resources	5	11
Parents	5	13
Communication	6	16
Policy to practice	8	21
Resources	2	2
management level	8	25
shape and form	4	5
amount of funding	5	5
National influences	6	11
recruitment	10	20
7. Overcoming barriers	8	60
8. Dissidence	3	5
types	7	14
strategies	5	9
9. Typologies	1	1
political vs professional	6	31
types of SEN	8	33
responses to change	6	10
type of school	6	9
officer vs support service roles	2	3

Name of node	Sources	References
10. Threats to maintenance	2	2
recruitment	6	15
loss of specialist skills	6	9
national government policy	8	25
local government policy	4	5
financial pressures	1	2
demographic changes	1	1
delegation	6	14
staff turnover	5	8
overload on schools	4	5
parental pressure	5	17
expectations	3	11
mainstream quality issues	4	9
loss of strategic priority	1	2
limited ownership	2	5
support services	3	6
special provision	1	1
11. Outcomes (negative)	3	10